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HUNTING THE FOX

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BY

LORD WILLOUGHBY DE BROKE

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Song shall declare a way
How to drive care away,
Pain and despair away,
Hunting the Fox!

EGERTON WARBURTON.

PREFACE

In offering these reflections to the public I wish to disclaim any intention of laying down the law. What I have written is derived from my own experience as M.F.H., and from what I have tried to learn from serving as an apprentice under my Father, whose *Advice on Fox-Hunting* was published in 1906.

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CHAPTER I

THE FUTURE OF FOX-HUNTING

WHEN we declared war upon Germany in 1914, many people thought, some perhaps hoped, that Fox-hunting in the British Isles was doomed. It would appear that the former are likely to experience a pleasant shock of surprise, while the latter—if there be any—may be disappointed. For the immediate consequence of mobilization was the recognition of Fox-hunting as a first-class national asset. It is not too much to say that the Expeditionary Force could not have left England unless the nation could have drawn upon studs of well-bred hunters to bring the Peace establishment of Army horses up to war strength. Never were Cavalry so quickly or so well mounted as those regiments of Regulars and Yeomanry who embarked for France in August 1914.

But quite apart from the point of view of national utility, Fox-hunting will surely survive from its own innate qualities. The manner in

which it has lived through all the obstacles of war time is a sufficient testimony to its vitality. And here let us pay our tribute to those who have helped the sport through these critical times: to the tact and sagacity of the Committee of the M.F.H. Association, and above all to those who through age, sex, or any other reason, were prevented from serving in the Army, and who took the Hounds out day after day under very trying conditions. To ride a horse half-fit and to ride that horse all day; to hunt Hounds that are poorly fed; to know that even if they were in good enough condition to tire their Fox he would almost surely find an open earth; to be short-handed both in the hunting-field and in the kennel; to have a diminishing number of walks for puppies;—all these things have not made the management of hunting during the War a very pleasing occupation. From the point of view of the Master and his Staff the only compensation that can be imagined, beyond the gratification of duty done, is that the Hounds have not been ridden over by a large and impetuous Field. Even this advantage has its objectionable side: the Huntsman wants at least enough people out to catch his horse if he has a fall and turns him loose.

However, we seem to have put the worst behind us, unless indeed we have another war. We may breathe again now that we have been able to breed

and enter a certain number of young Hounds each year. In the last resort this was the only thing that really mattered. Had the great governing Kennels of England ceased to produce the Fox-hound, the end would not have been far distant. All else can be re-created except the Hounds. The "raw material" will breed itself fast enough. All the rest is well within the range of British genius. So far indeed from making Fox-hunting more difficult, the revival of agricultural prosperity is calculated to make it easier than it has been for many years. When prices were high in the Early and Middle Victorian Age, a large proportion of farmers could afford to hunt, and did hunt, while farmers generally enjoyed such a degree of affluence that they did not trouble very much about claims. Moreover, they could afford to look after their fences in the proper way, instead of mending them with wire. When prices fell in the early 'eighties and agricultural depression looked as if it had come to stay, the hunting farmer became rarer; Hunt Committees had to spend more money on claims; fences were neglected for lack of funds and labour, and wire was used in some countries to save trouble. In fact, owing to the low prices, a general hand-to-mouth state of things prevailed on the land that did not make the management of a hunting country quite so easy as it had been in the golden age. On the other hand, as we have lately realized to

our cost from the national point of view, the area under grass increased steadily, and in a certain sense—possibly overestimated—enhanced the charm of riding over the country. But, as well as the grass, riches were all this time increasing in the commercial world, albeit at the expense of a neglected agriculture, and the successful Briton, as is his wont, turned his eyes to the hunting-field, hired a hunting-box, and spent his money on the Sport of Kings. So Fox-hunting continued to flourish, supported by a sound balance at its bankers', and, above all, by the love of sport inherent in all classes of the realm. If this brief analysis of the fortunes of the chase be correct; if agricultural prosperity has gone hand in hand with the prosperity of hunting; if hunting has become more popular not because of agricultural depression, but in spite of it, then we have nothing to fear from a revived agriculture. The farmer will have the golden key in his hand, and be able to mount his horse and show us the way over the fences. Human nature will probably be much the same after the War as it was before the War.

Hunting, like the drama or any other institution, depends for its existence on the support of public opinion. Public opinion is not an easy thing to define; probably when we speak of public opinion we refer to that amount of thought, tradition, sentiment, and practical support which can be

brought to bear on any given proposition. The life of a thing will ultimately be secured by the number and the ability of the people who intend to make it a success. A bad cause well organized may survive long enough to astonish even its own devotees. But a good cause is never lost. Fox-hunting is a good cause, if ever there was one. And the War has surely increased the number and ardour of its supporters. The one thing that all Fox-hunters in the Fighting Services have looked forward to throughout the War was the great day when they would hunt again. Hundreds of boys who had never even ridden before the War found a fresh charm in life by learning to ride and to love horses. Any one can testify to this who has seen the sad faces of all ranks in a Cavalry regiment in the throes of being de-horsed and put on to bicycles. And not only did these boys learn to ride, but many of them while training at home had their first taste of the elixir of the chase, and will be good friends to Fox-hunting for all time.

On the whole, then, we may expect to be confronted with nothing very new in the management of hunting after the War. If there be any one who is temperamentally opposed to sport, and would injure it if he could, he is hardly worth considering. His whole outlook would probably be anti-social and un-English in whatever rank of

life he is to be found. He can perhaps best be described as the spiritual descendant of that often-quoted band of reformers who wished to put a stop to bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. The only pressure to which Fox-hunting might have to yield to a certain degree in some countries does not proceed from any prejudice against sport, but is purely economic in its character. The national need for houses or gardens, or public works, may by common consent become more imperative in certain suburban districts than the national need for the local Hunt, which may fail to sustain what has probably been for many years somewhat of a spoon-fed existence. Changes of this kind are purely local, and will have no effect on hunting as a whole. Let us not forget that Foxes were once hunted and killed in Mayfair and Kensington, and that hunting did not cease in the British Isles because Lord Berkeley was no longer able to kennel his Hounds at Charing Cross. For every pack that was disestablished by the expansion of cities, others were formed in rural districts, until we now have more packs of Foxhounds in the United Kingdom than ever we had before.

There remains one cardinal principle with regard to the spirit of Fox-hunting. If it is to retain its vigour, it must never become the privilege

of any particular class. Like all other really good things it is either national or else it is nothing. If ever it presents the appearance of being based upon exclusiveness the whole fabric will dissolve. The proper preservation of Fox-hunting is a trust held by all parties to its direction, whether land-owners, farmers, or subscribers, in order to provide the healthiest form of British sport for every one who can enjoy it, whether on foot or on horseback. There is a young generation growing up who have not had the tonic of Military Service. Hunting is the one field sport left in these islands—with the possible exception of Deer-stalking, which is only enjoyed by a small minority—that in the face of modern luxury still calls for courage, endurance, decision, and nerve. Let us hand it down to those who come after us in its best and purest form.

CHAPTER II

Masters of Foxhounds—To dig or not to dig?—Choice of Hunt-servants—Farmers' horses—Puppy walkers.

No one is too good to be a Master of Foxhounds. If he be gifted with the average endowment of tact, administrative talent, power of penetrating character, and all other attributes that form the essential equipment of a successful public man, so much the better; but he should at least be reared in the atmosphere and tradition of country life, fond of sport for its own sake, a good judge of Horses and Hounds, and the possessor of a remarkably thick skin. For in addition to directing the sport in the Field, the M.F.H. is indeed a public man who should have some faculty for the art of government, being ultimately responsible for the welfare of the country over which he presides. The character and ability of the Hunt Committee and Secretary, and the disposition of the owners and occupiers of land may make his task proportionately easy or difficult as the case may be.

But there is no limit to the influence of the M.F.H. if he has the power and the will to use it wisely and well, fortified by the resolve to leave his country, when he lays down his office, in at least as good a state as he found it, and as much better as he can possibly make it. The proper administration of a hunting country is a vital part of Fox-hunting. As a general principle the Master should always work through the agency of the Secretary and the Committee, who should consult him before taking important decisions. But the Master had better not come into open and direct contact with anything that has to do with finance, however much he may advise in private council with regard to ways and means. The main postulate is that he should know everything that is going on, so that he may place his experience and influence at the disposal of the Secretary. The only administrative department that he might conceivably take into his own hands is that of the earth-stopping. If the Secretary hunts every day in the season from the beginning of Cub-hunting, he can manage the earth-stopping himself, and it is probably better so. But even then the M.F.H. and the Huntsman should be personally acquainted with every earth-stopper in the country, and know where to find him, especially if the Secretary lives some distance from the Kennel, and cannot therefore be communicated with on an emergency. But who-

ever actually manages the earth-stopping, the importance of it cannot be overestimated. A badly stopped country is responsible for more trouble to the cause of Fox-hunting than almost anything else. It acts and reacts on the whole reputation of the sport. To draw coverts blank because the earths are open places the entire Hunt in a ridiculous position. To run to ground just as Hounds are settled to their Fox causes acute disappointment to every one. If the Fox does not find an open earth until he has shown a good run, some of the ladies and gentlemen may indeed have enjoyed their gallop, and may take refuge in the comfortable formula that the good Fox will live to run another day. This light-hearted prophecy may or may not be fulfilled. No one can tell. Some one may make it his business to see that the Fox does not get out of that earth alive. But it is quite certain that constantly running to ground seriously impairs the *moral* of both Huntsman and Hounds. Nothing makes a pack of Foxhounds so well as killing beaten Foxes. Nothing unmakes them like being robbed of their game when they are running for blood. And with regard to the preservation of Foxes, the ancient paradox, "The more Foxes you kill, the more you have to kill," contains a vital truth. The whole countryside soon gets to know whether the Hounds are killing their Foxes or not. If they kill them, all is well.

If not, some officious person may think it his duty to save them the trouble.

A whole chapter might be written on the science of earth-stopping. It is probably right to try to proceed on the principle of putting permanent grates to every drain, which, with periodical inspection, shall last for all time, and to stop securely every earth at the beginning of Cub-hunting until about February 1, when the earths may be opened to allow the vixens access to them, and put to in the morning and reopened at night. But much will depend on the individual earth-stopper and the nature of the country. Some earth-stoppers seem to be born and not made, while in some countries the badgers will play havoc with the most elaborate defences. But there is one element that has an important, if indirect, bearing on earth-stopping which is within the orbit of the Master's decision. This is the matter of digging. During Cub-hunting the Cub should always be dug out and eaten unless there are very obvious reasons to the contrary. To take an extreme case, a Cub may be marked to ground very early, before the Hounds have done any work, in a place from which it would obviously take a gang of navvies at least two hours to get him out. By this time the sun would be risen, and it might do the condition of the Hounds more good to try to find another Cub, not forgetting to stop the earth before

drawing again. Some Masters will leave a digging-party and trust to getting back to the earth and killing the Cub later on. If this course is followed, one of the establishment should be left at the earth to direct operations. If the digging-party succeeds in digging down to the Cub, and there seems to be no prospect of the Hounds being able to come and eat him, the whipper-in, or whoever is in command, should have orders to let the Cub go rather than bring him to the Huntsman in a bag. A mounted man in livery carrying a Fox about the country in a bag is not an edifying spectacle; and to eat a Fox out of a bag on the way home does not do Hounds much good. If, on the other hand, the Hounds mark their Cub to ground after a fair morning's work, then the M.F.H. should not be afraid to face a good long dig. He will blood his hounds, teach them to mark their Foxes to ground, give satisfaction to the Fox preservers, and very likely dig out the earth or drain in such a way that it is safe for the season.

So much for digging during Cub-hunting. Digging after November 1 is another matter. To dig or not to dig? That is the question. The general ethics of modern Fox-hunting would seem to preclude the practice; but the Master's decision must be guided by the scent, the weather, the length of daylight, and the prospective magnitude of the operation. If it is a good scenting day and

the precious hours of daylight are short, he will be wise to try to find another Fox, unless the dig is certain to be only a matter of a few minutes. Good scenting days are so rare that not a moment must be wasted. If he decides not to dig, he should have the Hounds called away immediately, and leave the earth quietly and quickly. He will in this manner cause the minimum of disappointment to the Hounds, and disclose the refuge of the Fox to as few people as possible. To potter about over the earth, to collect a crowd of foot-people who amuse themselves by an amateur dig after the Hounds have gone, to keep the Field waiting, and in the end to disappoint the Hounds,—all this is bad policy from every point of view. If the scent is so poor that the chance of a good run is remote, the weather fine, and the daylight long, a dig may be legitimate even during the regular hunting season.

Having digressed somewhat on the subject of digging for the purpose of illustrating its influence on the welfare of the Hunt, let us return to some other aspects of Mastership. Of these the engagement of the servants is one of the most difficult and hazardous. It is easier to choose a wife than to choose a Huntsman. The M.F.H. may know all about some particular Huntsman and have the fortune to find him free at the right moment, otherwise he will have to rely upon hearsay; but

it is well to reinforce such knowledge by watching the man at his work. If a week or more can be spent in this way, so much the better. One day is a great deal better than nothing, but it requires a judge of very ripe experience to form an opinion in one day, and even then it is very easy to make a mistake. Something may be gathered from voice, manner, horsemanship, and the look of the Hounds. But the day may be one of those good scenting days when all Huntsmen are dubbed the finest Huntsmen in Europe, or it may be one of those terrible days a succession of which would ruin the reputation of the very elect. The cardinal tests of the ability of a Huntsman in the field are his capacity to mark and to bear in mind the exact spot where the leading Hounds lose the scent, and his power to keep his Hounds together well in front of his horse, with their noses to the ground, without too much help from his whipper-in. If a Huntsman is perpetually in front of the Hounds, drifting about with no apparent reference to the place where they threw up, or if he is constantly sending one of his whippers-in to collect small parties of Hounds, you may be sure there is something wrong.

An attempt will be made in another chapter to deal more fully with these points. We are now on our visit of inspection, and unless the scent is first-rate, a rough and ready judgement might

possibly be formed by keeping them in view. In any case, a visit should be paid to the Kennel, not forgetting the boiling-house. If the Kennel and its inmates, both human and animal, are clean and tidy, and the food thick, with not too much soup in it—none would probably be better—then the impression is favourable.

Let us assume that the Huntsman is engaged and has entered on his duties on May 1. Although the M.F.H. is ultimately responsible for him and should know what he is doing, there is such a thing as the Master interfering too much in the details of kennel management. When a man is engaged for the important position of Huntsman, he is worthy of a free hand to develop the condition of the Hounds in his own way, and in modern phrase it "is up to him to make good." His employer should satisfy himself before engaging him that he is likely to proceed upon sound principles with regard to feeding and exercise, the breaking of young Hounds, and the management of Whelps, and then leave the execution of these principles to the servant, who if he cannot be trusted to produce his pack in the autumn fit to kill an afternoon Fox, and well-broken enough not to need the whip, had better make way for some one else. The suggestion that the Master may be well advised to leave the Huntsman to do his own work in the Kennel is not meant to imply that he should neglect

the Kennel in the summer. If he is really fond of Hounds he will want to breed a pack worth looking at on the flags, and it is a great advantage to the Huntsman if his Master will invite the visits and criticisms of various judges and breeders. No one is too old to learn, and a wise Huntsman who can keep his mouth shut and his ears open on these occasions will gather much food for reflection.

The choice of a whipper-in is in a certain sense less important. Provided he can take care of his horses and has a fair share of the great gift of receptivity, he will, as a general rule, become whatever the Huntsman can make him. Some establishments seem to have the art of turning out good men. Others never seem to be able to teach anybody, probably because no definite system is maintained, because blame is given when things go wrong, no praise when things go right, while those in authority are either incompetent or unwilling to give a reasoned explanation of the why and the wherefore of orders.

Having engaged his servants, the M.F.H. will have to find horses for them to ride. The governing principle is to give them good ones; this is not only the kindest but the cheapest plan. A high authority has remarked that a good servant will always take care of a good horse. Self-preservation will prompt him to do this, because he will not want to put a safe mount out of action. The same

instinct will not make him particularly anxious about the welfare of a bad one. It is wise to buy as many horses as possible from the farmers. The hunting-farmer is one of the best, if not the best of friends to Fox-hunting, and from every point of view should be encouraged to own and breed good hunters. There is no greater encouragement to him in this direction than the knowledge that he will always have a willing customer in the M.F.H. if he can produce the goods. If this understanding can be created, the M.F.H. will have the great advantage of having the pick of all the best farmers' horses in the country. He has an opportunity of seeing them because he visits all districts regularly when hunting, and can make it his business to know all the young horses which the farmers ride. The spectacle of a horse bought from a farmer carrying one of the Staff—or maybe the M.F.H. himself—well to the front, not only advances the national cause of horse-breeding by force of example, but promotes good-will and legitimate pride by giving the late owner of the horse a reflected, almost a proprietary, interest in the establishment. To quote Egerton Warburton :

> And should his steed with trampling feet
> Be urged across your tender wheat,
> That steed, perchance, by you was bred,
> And yours the corn on which he's fed.

If it is well for the M.F.H. to take a general

interest in the farmers' horses, it is essential that he should take particular interest in the puppies and puppy walkers. The personal touch in this matter, as in most others, is more valuable than many silver cups, though prizes and a good luncheon on a fine day in July undoubtedly warm the heart.

CHAPTER III

Masters of Foxhounds (*continued*)—Cub-hunting—Regular hunting—Control of the Field—Drawing—Pace from covert to covert.

LET us now consider the duties of the M.F.H. in the hunting-field. Of these the scientific direction of the Cub-hunting is of crucial importance. It is here that the pack is made or marred. It cannot be too often repeated that the primary object of Cub-hunting is to teach the young Hounds to hunt, and in addition to complete the education of the last year's entry. Puppies are of no proven value to the pack during their first season, and cannot even begin to be counted as reliable until at least the end of their second Cub-hunting. As well as training the young Hounds, the Cub-hunting season gives opportunity and leisure to the Master and his Staff to study the science and to practise the art of the chase. Each day should add something to knowledge, which is the secret of success in hunting as in everything else.

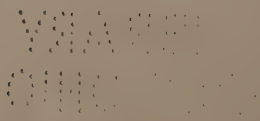
Cub-hunting should begin the very moment

the state of the harvest will allow, and should be pursued relentlessly, no matter how hard the ground may be. Continuity of training is of supreme value, and to interrupt it is a fatal mistake. The M.F.H. should be out every day himself, so as to make sure by personal supervision that a definite system is carried out and that no liberties are taken. In bad scenting weather, when Cubs do not come to hand easily, temptation to depart from orthodox methods may easily arise, when the influence of the M.F.H. should be on the side of that little extra bit of perseverance that sooner or later is bound to prevail. Keep on playing the game, the Cubs will be caught, and the pack will be made, not forgetting that one really well-beaten Cub killed is worth more than almost any amount of fresh ones chopped before the Hounds have had to work for them. They should have their blood and hackles up, and be savage with their Fox before they kill him. When two or three couples catch a fat Cub asleep and the remainder of the pack wander up mainly to see what is the matter, it is doubtful if any permanent good is done except to add to the number of noses on the kennel door. Here and there, no doubt, Cubs will have to be held up in small places. It is better to do this than not catch any at all. But the orthodox method is to visit the strongholds first and to stick to them all morning. The best way

to teach a pack of Hounds perseverance, the true secret of success, is for the Master and his Staff to exhibit this quality themselves. Hounds are very receptive. Even after it would seem certain that every Cub has left the covert, it is always well worth while to draw back over the old ground on the chance of getting a tired one on to his legs who has lain down, hoping his enemies had left. This is often much more profitable than breaking fresh ground, and having to begin all over again to tire a fresh litter of Cubs. There are few things in Fox-hunting of more value to the *moral* of the Hounds than to finish a long dragging morning by re-finding a leg-weary Cub and killing him after a good cry lasting about a quarter of an hour. The lesson learnt from this experience is that in dealing with a litter of Cubs it is a good general rule to keep on the same ground as long as possible, much on the same principle as in dealing with a covey of young partridges at the same time of year. At a certain phase of the operation everything seems to be hopeless, and the game to have vanished. But more often than not it will tend to creep back home again, if indeed it is not lying down on its own ground. It should be remarked that a tired Cub will often lie very close, and not always in the thick places, sometimes trying to hide in the boundary hedges and ditches of the covert, so that in drawing back over the old ground the search

should not be perfunctory, but even more patient and thorough than in drawing over it for the first time.

During at least the first month of Cub-hunting, Hounds should be kept in covert and not allowed to see daylight. This for two reasons: first, the puppies learn to depend on the old Hounds and go to the cry much better in covert than in the open. They cannot stare about, and are forced to use their ears and their intelligence. Second, the whole pack learns how to correct its own faults without holloas and assistance—the most valuable of all lessons—when the Cub makes a sharp turn, and the scent is overrun. In addition to this, the Staff cannot keep near Hounds in the open until at least the middle of October. What happens? The training and condition of the old Hounds gives them the lead; the puppies follow them, not rightly knowing what they are after; sooner or later a check occurs; a hare jumps up, offering a temptation which impetuous youth cannot resist, even in its second season, and a general demoralization ensues. The old Hounds are disgusted, and the puppies, after running the hare as long as sight will serve, throw up their heads and lie down to lap in the nearest pond. The Huntsman and whippers-in will probably not get all parties together again until such mischief has been done that will take many mornings of steady work in covert to correct.



If, in spite of all precautions, Hounds get away on an old Fox, they should be stopped as gently and quietly as possible, in such a manner as not to make them think they have done anything wrong. If the Huntsman is lucky enough to be with them at the first check, he can draw them away from the line directly their heads are up and he can gain their attention. This is so constantly done with the best intentions during the regular hunting that it should not be difficult during the Cub-hunting. They should then be taken quietly back to the woodland at such a pace as will give them time to get their minds and bodies cool before asking them to find another Cub. Hounds should never be invited to draw with their mouths open.

During the month of October, when the country is a little more practicable for mounted pursuit, and after the puppies have been well drilled in covert for some weeks, if the whole pack come out of covert well together on the line of their Cub, then they may be allowed to go, when a sharp burst or two in the open will teach them to get through the fences, and improve their condition by opening their pipes. But before the 1st of November they should never be holloaed away on the first Fox that leaves the covert. This Fox is nearly sure to be the old dog Fox, who will probably lead his pursuers so far away from home that it may be impossible to get back to the covert

in time to deal with the Cubs ; and in the second place it is a golden rule laid down by a great authority that during the Cub-hunting season Hounds should always be made to find their own Fox.

After November 1 the M.F.H. will have to address himself to the management of his Field. This task is rendered easy or difficult in proportion to the manner in which the cardinal rules of the chase are scientifically observed. For instance, if the woodlands are drawn up wind, the ladies and gentlemen will be able to hear the Huntsman draw for his Fox, and hear the Hounds find him. And in fact the management of the Field, both in covert and in the open, depends indirectly upon the Huntsman. If his horn and voice are always clear and intelligible in covert, every one will know exactly what he is doing and when it is safe to stand still without the fear of being left behind. If he is vague and indefinite, like a bad actor who, in the language of the theatre, cannot " get it over the footlights," then the Field will quite naturally stalk him to see for themselves what he is doing, with the result that no Master can control them. In the open, if the Huntsman rides well up to his Hounds and has sufficient wisdom and self-control to stand stock-still, well away from them, when they come to a check, then the Field will also be obliged to stand still. There is nothing else for

them to do. About seven times out of ten the Hounds will hit off the line for themselves, and all goes well again. When he is ultimately obliged to try his hand at a cast, if he will only make the smallest possible circle first up wind and then down wind, with his Hounds well in front of him, the Field may be induced to stand still because they can see what is going on, and there will be no excuse for following him about when he is casting. This method of handling the situation at a check has been prescribed by the best authorities, and serves the purpose of making it possible for the Master to control the Field, to say nothing of its being by far the most likely way to catch the Fox. If, on the other hand, the Huntsman thinks that the moment a check occurs he must be up and doing, and acts in the contrary manner to that which has just been indicated, by riding into his Hounds and starting off on an indeterminate dragging expedition down wind with all his Hounds behind him with their heads up, it is next door to impossible for the Master to prevent the Field from following him, smashing the fences when Hounds are not running, and foiling all the ground, while the Hounds are far more concerned to avoid being jumped upon than to put their noses down for the scent. This painful exhibition generally ends in the Master losing his temper and the Huntsman losing his Fox.

It would seem, therefore, that the Master's duty of controlling the Field will depend to a great degree upon the technique of his Huntsman. He can also make things immeasurably easier for himself if he can prevail upon his Field to give him precedence, if he is there in time to claim it, whenever Hounds are not running. If he is in front he can be as quiet and as powerful as the policeman regulating the traffic outside the Mansion House. But if even one lady or gentleman get in front of him, his power to set the pace is gone ; he is, then, either obliged to raise his voice with the risk of getting the Hounds' heads up and spoiling the run, or else he has to race for the lead and set the whole cavalcade cantering and competing at the very moment when a sober pace should be the order of the day. It is a mistake to hold up the Field at a gate or in a road for a moment longer than is absolutely necessary. The more eager spirits will tend to work round on the flanks and get out of hand. The ideal state of things to aim at is the creation of a feeling of confidence that no one will lose his start by conforming to the pace and direction of the M.F.H. when Hounds are at fault. Here again the Huntsman can help. If the short circle already described has failed and he is making a wider circle down wind, he should always let his Master and the Field know by voice or horn when Hounds have hit off the scent again, that is,

if they happen to do so at such a distance that the cry may not be easily heard. The exuberance of the preceding gallop begets much talk at a check. However regrettable this may be, it is not unnatural; and on every count the Field should never be given a reasonable excuse for saying that the Huntsman has slipped them.

In approaching a covert to find a Fox, it is wise to draw the woodlands up wind so as to get a good start with him, while the small coverts should be drawn down wind, so as to give the Fox a good chance of getting on his legs in time to avoid being chopped. But in both cases the last half-mile at least should be covered at a walk, so as to put the Hounds into covert with their mouths shut and to allow the rear of the column to close up. If this rule is not carefully followed the Hounds will not draw well, while the straggling horsemen become distributed all over the country, and may very likely head the Fox by trying to make up for lost time and to get a start by riding on the down-wind side of the covert. In the absence of military discipline it is remarkable how the tail of a Field of two hundred people will lengthen out, even if the Hounds are only travelling on the road at the rate of six or seven miles an hour. By walking for the last half-mile or more before getting to the covert-side, the M.F.H. will give himself a chance of collecting his Field. Sometimes circumstances

make it difficult or impossible to draw a woodland up wind in the orthodox manner. On these occasions a short halt may be called about a mile from the covert, and one of the Staff instructed to canter on down wind for a view; this is especially to be thought of after Christmas, when the Foxes have already been hunted and the coverts are thin. But on no account should the Huntsman be allowed to ride up to any covert, send his man on for a view, try to put the Fox out by blowing his horn, and then gallop the Hounds round to lay them on to his brush. This practice sounds tempting, and may indeed result in something brilliant, but it is thoroughly unsound. Even if done once the Hounds will not forget it for weeks, and the next time they are asked to draw, will be looking up into their Huntsman's face expecting him to clap them on to their Fox and save them the trouble of drawing. The more successful this manœuvre, the more fatal its effect upon the *moral* of the pack.

The pace from covert to covert should be regulated mainly by the temperature and the wind. Hounds can travel comfortably on the road at least half as fast again on a cool day up wind as on a warm day down wind. The natural pace for a Hound on the road is about six miles an hour. They should never be asked to go to the meet faster than this, except perhaps during the first few weeks of Cub-hunting, when a some-

what faster pace will help their condition; and on no occasion should they be hurried beyond this pace on the way home. But from covert to covert they can be accustomed to go on an average about eight miles an hour. Like all men and women they are creatures of habit; like some men and women they are intensely receptive, and can be taught by a clever and sympathetic Huntsman to do almost anything.

The M.F.H. should of course arrange to draw all his country impartially, with a mental reservation that the woodlands can be drawn with advantage more often than small coverts. An isolated covert in what people call "the good country" had as a general rule better not be drawn more than once every six weeks. It is better not to go Cub-hunting at all in a covert of this kind. If it is known to contain a strong litter of Cubs, some Masters think it right to disturb them before November 1. If this is done, the Cubs should on no account be mobbed. They should be allowed to go quietly away without anything being said, and such Hounds as come out after them should be stopped and turned back to the cry in the covert. The body of the pack should be allowed to hunt their own Cub away. But it is a mistake to spend too long a time Cub-hunting in a pet covert, whose proper function is to provide good runs when every one is out to enjoy them later on. Even if

no Cub is killed in the covert, after an hour or two of work every stick in the place will smell of Fox-hound for weeks afterwards, and a grave risk is incurred of not finding there again until after Christmas, or perhaps until the next season.

The M.F.H. should never try to elude the foot-people by trotting away from the Meet to draw a distant covert. The County Pack and the sport it can show in each locality is in a certain sense the traditional property of the natives, whether they are mounted or on foot; they are proud of their inheritance; and if the foot-folk do holloa out of place, or head a Fox or two once or twice in the season, the harm they may do in this way to sport is a small matter compared with the legitimate disappointment caused to many people who are real friends to Fox-hunting, although only mounted on "Shanks' mare," by not having a chance of seeing a Fox found in the local covert.

CHAPTER IV

The Huntsman—Qualities required—Feeding, exercise, and breaking.

If no one is too good to be a Master of Foxhounds, it is certain that no one is too good to be a Huntsman, be he professional or amateur. A man who can combine in his own person the many qualities that are the essential attributes of a first-class Huntsman is indeed difficult to find. Considering what a very important part the Huntsman plays in the lives of so many people, it is open to doubt whether we take enough pains to attract talent into the service, or whether we take enough trouble to train such talent as we have. In almost every important profession save that of service with Hounds, there is some definite standard of technique, some school for students where only the best is taught, some theatre where the best men can be seen at their work. The doctor, the actor, the lawyer, the painter, not to mention many others, can all study their art from the written and spoken lessons of recognized authorities, and,

better still, can actually see the first-class artist performing, and copy him if they can. But the opportunity for Hunt-servants to acquire knowledge is haphazard and fortuitous : a boy may grow grey in the service of Fox-hunting without even seeing Hounds properly handled or Foxes scientifically killed. This disability is unavoidable, but there it is. Unavoidable because the young servant may be limited to the observation of a Huntsman who may be setting him a bad example at the most impressionable time of his life. Lucky is the youth who stays long enough in one place where the orthodox system is carried out.

Many people will say that Huntsmen are born and not made. This, like many other generalizations, is only partly true. No doubt some men have more talent for the chase than others ; but talent cannot afford to dispense with knowledge. The French character would almost appear to have welded the experiences of the hunting-field into a definite, perhaps even an elaborate science, thus creating a recognized school which must surely be valuable to the student. The British are perhaps more impatient of detail, not overfond of an academy, so, beyond certain rather vague traditions, and one or two writings that will be referred to in a later chapter, the young Huntsman in this country has nothing much to guide him but his power of receptivity and his

ability to profit by his own mistakes. There is no doubt that personal experience is the best teacher. But personal experience would be quickened if it could be fortified by the experience of the great Masters of the chase collected in such a form as to be accessible to us all.

Now to our Huntsman. Within reason it is not essential that he should be so very young and so very light. This does not mean to say that he should be old and heavy. But as a general rule it is not likely that a man will have absorbed enough knowledge to be a successful Huntsman until he is well past thirty. At this age there is the best part of twenty good years in front of him if only he knows how to ride, even if his horses have to carry as much as a "light fourteen stone." If they are asked to carry more than this, the task of mounting him in some countries would become formidable, possibly prohibitive. But we must not forget that a light-weight who does not know how to ride will get to the bottom of his horse, while a middle-weight who sits still and keeps hold of his horse's head will beat him every time. His very limitations will have taught the middle-weight, if he has any sense, not to take liberties with his horses, while the superior momentum of a middle-sized horse and rider will enable them to brush aside obstacles and get through the dirt with less exertion than a feather-weight couple.

If the verdict on the whole is in favour of the middle size in man and horses, it is certainly in favour of the middle size in Hounds, which aspect of hunting will be dealt with in a later chapter.

But whatever the Huntsman weighs, there is no doubt that he should be a good horseman. This postulate is not purely utilitarian. It is not too much to say that unless he is a good horseman he is not likely to be a good Huntsman, because to be a good horseman involves the possession of that knowledge of and sympathy with animals that is an essential portion of all true woodcraft, particularly the woodcraft of the Huntsman, the main purpose of which is to influence the intelligence of animals for the amusement of man. If things do not go smoothly between a Huntsman and his horse, you may be sure that he has missed a part of that understanding of his raw material which must be the main characteristic of the successful exercise of his profession. And if he does not understand one part of his raw material, the Horse, he will not be likely to have a temperament to understand the other two, the Hound and the Fox; and of these two the proper understanding of the Hound is of the first importance. The Hounds and not the Huntsman have to find, hunt, kill, and eat the Fox. The frame of mind of a Huntsman towards his Hounds should be inspired and governed by the principle that his duty is only to render

them such services as they cannot perform for themselves, and never to interfere with them for any other purpose. Hence, roughly speaking, the two dominant ideas of the Huntsman should be to bring his Hounds into the Field in tiptop condition, and having got them away close to their Fox, not to go near them when they lose the scent, until they obviously feel the want of him, or unless he can give them some definite piece of information which they cannot obtain for themselves. Even this must be done with great judgement and skill if the doing of it involves the dangerous expedient of getting their heads up.

Condition is the key to success. If the question were asked, "What shows most sport and kills most Foxes?" the magic word "condition" would be a safe answer. A moderate-looking lot of Hounds will catch more Foxes than all the Peterborough winners put together if they are in better condition. Authorities may not quite agree as to the exact methods by which the requisite fitness can best be gained and kept. Some will advocate more summer exercise than others, and every one may not see eye to eye as to the amount of covering there should be on the Hounds' ribs at the beginning of Cub-hunting. The feeding demands primary attention. There is good ground for supporting the rule that the quantity of food should be reduced in the summer rather than the quality. In some

Kennels the thick oatmeal and flesh that is, or ought to be, served during the hunting season is watered down. This must surely be a mistake. Solids are the natural sustenance of dogs. They will no doubt swallow gallons of slush if they cannot get anything else, but as it does not stay by them, it is doubtful if it does them any good, and it is really wasted. It is true that when they are not working under high pressure they will require less food; but it is good policy in the summer to let the consistency remain thick as in the winter, and to give them less of it, with the addition of some boiled greens or nettles. Hounds should also be halted at summer exercise where the young grass is long, and they will soon obey the dictates of nature and clean their digestive organs by eating it. By giving them thick food in a greater or a less amount all the year round, the sound quality of their tissues will be maintained. After a fortnight of slush a Hound will become flabby; his coat, that true index of health, will lack lustre; he will lose his vitality, and his whole system will take weeks to recuperate at the very season of the year when he ought to be fit for long exercise. A Hound's condition should never be let down below a certain level. It is so much easier to let down than to build up.

The proper feeding of the Hounds has been given the first place in the summer duties of the Hunts-

man because, with regard to all kinds of stock both human and animal, the main avenue to health is diet. The next thing is exercise. The actual breaking of the young Hounds should be carried out with as little whip as possible. Any more whip than is necessary to ensure obedience is nothing more or less than gratuitous cruelty, which will one day recoil on the head of the person who uses it. If you see a pack of Hounds scatter in different directions with their sterns down whenever a whipper-in gets off his horse, you may be sure that the discipline of that pack has been obtained by sheer severity instead of by firmness, patience, and confidence. All good Foxhounds are highly bred, affectionate, sensitive creatures, and will not give you of their best if they are actuated by fear. Our forefathers apparently relied on the terror of the whip more than we do. Perhaps the years that have gone by have bred into the modern Foxhound a hereditary sense of discipline; but there is no doubt that to-day we have a better way. It is true that certain puppies, like certain boys and girls, are all the better for a stroke or two in season. But the instrument should be light and the application rare. Flogging can never be an effective substitute for voice, manner, personality, and the capacity for authority, without which requisites it is better not to enter the service of the Foxhound.

The entry should be exercised separately from the entered Hounds for some weeks, so that the entered Hounds who have already been disciplined may be spared the worry and annoyance occasioned by the drilling of the young ones. Short and gentle horse exercise may begin for both old and young Hounds about six weeks or so after the end of the hunting season, the hours and pace being gradually increased, until the whole pack covers during the month of August from eighty to a hundred miles a week. Some Huntsmen may perhaps advocate even more than this. But it is doubtful if more than a certain degree of fitness can be achieved by summer exercise, and the excessive straining of it may very likely subtract from the vitality of the pack to no useful purpose. The average working life of a Foxhound is so short that it can almost be counted in days ; let us therefore not waste a single hour of his energy. In countries where riot is plentiful, Hounds should of course be allowed to see it occasionally during the summer, and firmly, and above all quietly, forbidden to " look " at it. But however steady they may become under supervision in the summer, the last word about riot will not be said until they have killed several brace of Foxes. The blood of the Fox is the true antidote to the pursuit of the hare and the deer. Hounds will soon learn what animal they are brought out to hunt.

CHAPTER V

The Huntsman in the field—His proper position when handling Hounds—Dog language—A morning's Cub-hunting.

THE fact that the Huntsman has been the intimate companion of his Hounds during the summer does not necessarily add to his power of influencing them in the hunting-field. Cupboard love does not go very far with Foxhounds. It is the sport that tells. Bolingbroke, in one of his letters to Sir William Wyndham on the State of the Nation, wrote of the House of Commons: "You know the nature of that assembly: they grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged." Foxhounds are not like Mr. Jorrocks' horse Artaxerxes, of whom his owner said that he would sooner have a feed of corn than the finest run that ever was seen. As a matter of fact, it is not really a positive essential that the man who is going to hunt the Hounds should even have seen them in the summer at all. If he understands how to

handle them he will begin to get their confidence in a very few hours, and after he has killed a brace of Cubs with each pack they will not want to attach themselves to any one else.

Although the general plan of campaign during Cub-hunting differs from that of regular hunting, the actual method of handling Hounds is in principle the same. The primary idea that the Huntsman should bear in mind is that the Hounds should leave the Kennel in front of his horse and remain there all day, except when he is riding well away from them on a flank for the purpose of manœuvring them. This maxim may not be carried out to the letter on the road. But even here the body of the pack should always be in front of the Huntsman; they will naturally be there if he is only proceeding at what is called "Hound jog"; if he wants to go faster than this he should teach his Hounds to conform to his pace by the influence of his voice and manner, and not by having them whipped and frightened after him. Foxhounds can be taught to do almost anything if they are spoken to civilly, cheerfully, and firmly. It is not consistent with their dignity for the Huntsman to ride away from them at his own pace in silence, and for them to be rudely ordered to follow him by the whipper-in scolding them from behind. On the road, as elsewhere, a well-modulated dog language on the part of the Huntsman is invaluable.

In dealing with all kinds of animals, too much attention cannot be paid to the inflexions of the human voice. A Huntsman who cultivates this art can get his Hounds to go with him at any pace he likes without any whipper-in at all. In actual practice it is well to go to covert in September at almost eight miles an hour, for the sake of economizing daylight and incidentally for the sake of a little extra condition, slackening the pace, of course, to let Hounds get cool before they are asked to hunt. It is not difficult to achieve this pace at this time of year; Hounds are then fresh and eager, and in the early hours the traffic does not impede. On arriving at the covert-side, there is no occasion during Cub-hunting to send away either of the whippers-in for the purpose of getting a view. The Huntsman, having their assistance, will not find it a bad plan to halt about one hundred yards from the covert, and have his men so placed that they can prevent any Hound breaking away from him until he gives the signal after a minute's pause. When he says "Eleu in there!" the old Hounds know what to do fast enough, and will show the young ones the way into the covert. The Huntsman cannot now be too patient. He should follow his Hounds up to the outside of the covert, and not go inside himself until every Hound, both old and young, is well out of sight. Then he should go quite slowly to the gate of the covert,

using his voice all the time. This method has been here indicated in almost the detail of a drill, because the importance of teaching Hounds to draw properly cannot be overestimated. There is nothing more true in Fox-hunting than the old saying, "A Fox well found is half-killed." Let us see what happens if this system is not carried out. If the Huntsman does not wait for the young Hounds to enter the covert with the old ones, they will follow him round by the gate and not leave his horse's heels until the old Hounds open on a Fox, thus tending to acquire the fatal habit of expecting their Fox to be found for them instead of finding him themselves. If he indeed waits for all his Hounds to get through the fence and then trots away silently, hoping some time or other to meet them in the covert, the puppies will very naturally begin to wonder what has become of him, and will creep out of the covert by the same way they got in and follow on his track, so that soon after he gets inside, instead of finding every Hound busy drawing, he will perhaps find the old ones, who know more about hunting than he does, drawing for their Fox; but will find the young ones looking at his horse's tail, or, worse still, the drawing-party will very likely disturb some riot which may cross the ride in full view of the puppies, who will not be slow to take advantage of the treat, with an effect on their *moral* that will take weeks

to correct. If he had used his voice outside the covert, they would know where he was, and would the more readily tend to leave him and help the old Hounds to draw, instead of coming back to look for him at the place where they last saw him. The advantage of scientific over slipshod methods cannot be better illustrated than by a comparison between the right and the wrong way of putting Hounds into covert and getting them to draw. How often one hears that a certain pack of Foxhounds draw well, while another pack is slack in drawing. If the truth were only known, the slackness is probably due to a faulty technique on the part of the Huntsman rather than to the disposition of the Hounds. No doubt some individual Hounds draw better than others, and will find a Fox in spite of any Huntsman. But there is good ground for the opinion that the capacity of the pack as a whole to spread and draw well is an acquired rather than an inherited characteristic.

However, we will now imagine that all is well. Every Hound is out of sight "examining with curious nose each likely haunt," and the Huntsman is well away from them either in rear or on a flank, encouraging them with his voice while he awaits the thrill of the first find of the season. And let it be a find. If a whipper-in sees a Cub cross a ride he must not holloa. He can tell the Huntsman very quietly, who can then turn his horse's head

in the required direction, go on drawing, and give his Hounds the chance of crossing the line of their game. At all costs during Cub-hunting they must either find, or think they have found, their Fox for themselves. This is the way to teach them to hunt. If the Cub is unkennelled where the underwood is short and he can be easily viewed, some Huntsmen "see red" and cannot resist the temptation of galloping and holloaing at him to try to turn him into their mouths. This gipsy-like practice cannot be too strongly condemned. It usually results in a noisy and undignified exhibition of failure, with possibly a stubbed horse or a catastrophic encounter with a blind ditch. In the meantime he will have got the Hounds' heads up, and probably have caused the Cub to make a sharp turn, with the result that the Hounds overrun the line and can only be induced to hunt again after the loss of much time and tissue. Even if, for once, he baffles the Cub so that he is caught before he is well on his legs, little or no good is done. The young Hounds will not know what they are after, and the breaking up of the Cub will be a half-hearted affair, if indeed they will eat him at all. No. When the Cub is unkennelled, particularly in view, all hands should be silent and still, and the Hounds should be allowed to do the rest. The object of Cub-hunting is to teach the puppies to hunt, and to confirm the entered Hounds in the

practice of catching their Foxes at the end of the run and not at the beginning.

As soon as the first Cub is afoot the rest of the litter will also be roused, and the Hounds may soon be divided into two or more lots. If there is anything like a scent the whippers-in should not try to stop the Hounds to one lot, but should rather try to take positions where they may prevent any one lot breaking covert after the old Fox. The entire staff should now keep quiet and save their horses. The Huntsman should trot about the rides, awaiting the next phase of the operation. The old dog Fox will almost certainly leave the covert as soon as he hears the cry. But it should not be forgotten that the old vixen will very likely dodge about the covert to the very last minute in the hope of saving her Cubs by diverting attention to herself. And at this time of year some vixens when viewed at a certain distance, are apt to be mistaken for Cubs. On a certain memorable morning in the Midlands, every Fox except one had apparently left the covert and the pack all got together on one line. The first whipper-in, who was no novice, viewed the hunted one away and assured the Huntsman that he was after a Cub. The deluded man blew his Hounds away, expecting to handle a beaten Cub every minute. Imagine his surprise at being treated to a nine-mile point, at the end of which the Hounds ran

into the old vixen. But we will bar accidents for the moment and picture to ourselves one of those propitious mornings when the different lots have worked the Cubs with a fair cry for, say, two hours. The advantages of letting each lot hunt its own Cub are now apparent. Much tissue has been saved to both man and horse which would have been expended in rating and abusing the Hounds for doing the very thing they were brought out to do. Not only that, all the Cubs have been kept on their legs and are beginning to get tired at the same moment, so that as soon as one is caught and eaten it may not be very difficult to clap the Hounds on to another leg-weary Cub and crown the morning's training with yet another taste of blood. With a view to doing this, it is a good thing to leave the second whipper-in and second horseman to watch the rides while the first Cub is being eaten, so that, if they see another, the Huntsman knows whereabouts to draw up to him later on. But we have not yet killed our Fox. The Huntsman must judge the moment when the opportunity arises to get all parties together on to one Cub. Sooner or later one party will usually become stronger than the others and gradually absorb the smaller ones. The Huntsman can help the concentration by riding to the head of the now official party, cheering them, and sounding his horn when they cross a ride. The whole pack is

now settled to one Cub. Some Huntsmen will try to have him headed back into one quarter of the woodland. This policy is of doubtful expediency unless the Cub is nearly beaten and cannot get far away from the Hounds, because whenever he is turned the Hounds tend to overrun the scent, and the time lost in recovering it on the foil gives him the opportunity to think, and a fresh lease of life. It should be tried, however, when the Cub is almost done, rather than run the risk of changing on to a fresh Fox in another quarter. When the Hounds run into their Cub it is probably wise not to take him away from them. Let them tear him in pieces while they are angry, and thus learn the habit of breaking up their Foxes properly while the Huntsman excites them by horn and voice. Those who hunt Hounds in mountainous countries, where they cannot be with them when they kill, will tell you that Hounds will be content to kill their Foxes without eating them. This looks as if the eating of the Fox by the Hounds is not a natural process, but is really a *tour de force*, stimulated by the presence and manner of the men in red coats, before whom they wish to show off, prompted by a legitimate dash of vanity. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that the worry is the right finish to the chase. Nothing can be more melancholy or indecent than having to leave the carcase of such a beautiful creature as a Fox

hanging on a tree, after having vainly performed numerous antics to entice the Hounds to eat him. The best way to avoid this depressing anti-climax is to stand aside when they kill him, and feed their frenzy by sounding in their ears the right tocsin of the chase. A puppy has been known to fight for the head and win it on the very first morning of Cub-hunting. Let him keep it. The late Lord Henry Bentinck wrote that "a puppy that has once fought for the head and carried it home in triumph, trotting in front of the hounds, will never look at a hare again; he is made from that day, and marks himself for a stallion hound."

CHAPTER VI

The Huntsman (*continued*)—Laying Hounds on to a line—Getting Hounds away from covert on a Fox.

An attempt has been made in the last chapter to describe a successful morning, when scent and luck have served and the earths are well stopped. On these occasions everything seems so easy. But there will be some scentless mornings which will test the patience and perseverance of the very stoutest. The best thing the Huntsman can then do is to keep on moving and using his voice cheerily, so as to show his men, his Hounds, and the Cubs that he means to persevere. When the Hounds cannot speak to a Cub, the only thing that is likely to keep him on his legs is the sound of the human voice; but, if the covert is too thick for a horse to go through, it is better to stand still and encourage the Hounds to draw it rather than dismount and draw it on foot. The Huntsman only has to do this a few times for the Hounds to acquire the habit of never going into a thick place at all unless he gets off his horse and goes in first to show them the way.

Now this proposition contains the kernel of the true secret of hunting Hounds, which is always to endeavour to let the Hounds do everything for themselves, and even when help is actually given, to give it in such a manner that they do not know they are being helped, and think they are acting on their own initiative. This is why all the great master minds agree that Hounds, when in a difficulty, should never be meddled with except as a very last resort. Now in order to carry this idea into practice it cannot be too often repeated that the principal part of the technique of the Huntsman should be to keep his Hounds always well in front of him, where he can influence them by a half-turn of his horse's head, and keep their noses down, whereas, once he gets in front of them, he may require two or more men with whips to drive them after him with their noses in the air. The acquisition of this art requires some cultivation, and may be helped by remembering that the Huntsman must regulate his pace by the pace of the Hounds. If he does not wish them to get behind his horse, it seems a simple common-sense rule never to place himself in front of them. Yet many people seem to forget that on a bad scenting day Hounds will go slowly, and that on a good scenting day they will go quickly, and think that the Huntsman can enliven the proceedings on a poor scent by getting ahead of his Hounds and setting the pace himself.

There never was a greater fallacy. Huntsmen who adopt this practice are sometimes called quick, until they have lost Fox after Fox and eventually find that their reputation has disappeared without any one being able to give reasons in writing. The only occasion when the Huntsman should have his Hounds kept close to him by his whipper-in, and make the pace himself, is when he makes up his mind to go to a holloa, and rightly wishes to prevent the Hounds hunting any line until he has laid them on to the Fox he means to hunt. When he determines to go to a holloa, he should go and fetch his Hounds, distract their attention from what they are doing, and tell them in language about which there can be no mistake, that he is going to lay them on to a scent.

But even now he should not get ahead of the Hounds. He should carry them with him in his hand, so that he may be able to lay them all on to the line together.

And there is much fine art in laying Hounds on to a line. The manner in which it is done may make all the difference in the world to the day's sport, because, if it is attempted in a haphazard, unscientific fashion, it will almost surely result in either dragging them over the line without hitting it, or in " that fatal piece of bungling, hitting it heel-way," the most heart-breaking of all exhibitions. In order to avoid this the Huntsman should,

as already stated, have all his Hounds round his horse well in hand. The next, and the most important thing of all, is that, before he gets near the line, he should ascertain beyond all manner of doubt what is the direction of the Fox's head. When the Fox has been holloaed over a road or a ride in a covert this should not be difficult. If the whipper-in has had to go and fetch the Huntsman he can always give him full information on the way to the place. If the Huntsman is coming to the holloa, the whipper-in, or whoever has seen the Fox, should stand on the line with his horse's head the same way as the Fox has gone. Some distance—say twenty to thirty yards—before the Huntsman gets to the place where the Fox has crossed, he should stop and turn his horse's head in the direction that the Fox has gone, and put all the Hounds into the covert. He should then ride quite slowly down the ride or road, so as to give his Hounds time to spread and get their noses down. It is better for the Huntsman to keep in the ride than to go into the covert with his Hounds, because, by keeping in the ride, he has every Hound between him and his Fox, and is in a position to stop any Hound from getting on to the wrong side of the ride and speaking to the scent heel-way. If this system is carefully followed, the Hounds will soon get to learn when the time has come for them to feel for the scent, and they will get busy at once.

The Huntsman must not be disappointed if they do not always speak at once to the scent at the very place where the Fox is reported to have crossed, because he may make a sharp turn inside the covert, as soon as he is out of sight, and may run parallel to the ride for a few yards before resuming his original direction; or it may be one of those curious days on which Hounds seem to own the scent better when they are a few yards to the right or left of the actual line; or again, if the Fox is running down wind, the steam from the horses may spoil the scent for a few yards. Strange things happen out hunting. It is true, however, that when you are hunting Hounds there is nothing more mortifying than to be shown by your own tried and trusted whipper-in the exact spot where he last saw the Fox, and then to find that your Hounds will not own to the scent. But it is certain that the best way to avoid this distressing experience is to slow down some time before you get to the place, so as to give your Hounds plenty of time to spread and feel for the scent, and they will sooner or later tell you where their Fox is gone.

To lay Hounds on to a line in the open in the middle of a field is a little more difficult, but the principle of the operation is the same, the all-important thing being to keep them well in hand and not attempt to lay them on until the direction of the Fox's head has been definitely ascertained.

Having found this out, the Huntsman should then manœuvre so as to get every Hound between him and his Fox. This can best be done by pulling up, or slackening his pace, so as to allow the Hounds to get well in front of his horse. If the Fox has crossed a field it is a good plan to put the Hounds through a gate or gap into the field, and for the Huntsman not to enter the field with them. By turning his horse's head he can then draw the Hounds across the line, and as soon as one Hound even has spoken they will all start together merrily, and will take the credit for themselves. This method also has the advantage of keeping the riders off their backs by giving them a field's start. If, on the other hand, the Huntsman gets ahead of his Hounds and rides wildly, cap in hand, in the direction the Fox has gone, with the pack straggling after him, half the Hounds will be staring at his horse's tail, while the other half will very likely strike the scent heel-way if the Fox is travelling down wind, as is generally the case. The same tactics should be applied when the Fox has crossed a road; the Huntsman should throw his Hounds over the road, but on no account enter the field himself. In this way he is so placed that he is master of the situation; he can stop Hounds if they happen to hit the scent heel-way; he can also prevent the horsemen from entering the field until every Hound has got his head down and is

well settled to the line. If he jumps the fence out of the road with the Hounds behind him, every one else will jump out of the road, and very likely drive him and the Hounds for two or three fields before he hits the line, if, indeed, under these circumstances he is lucky enough to hit it at all. He, moreover, stands a good chance of being forced into taking a parallel line to that of the Fox, and he will learn, without studying Euclid, that two parallel lines will never meet.

So much for the art of laying Hounds on to a scent. Let us now find our Fox, and offer some suggestions for the conduct of the Huntsman in the field after November 1. On and after this magic date it will be his first duty to aim at getting all his Hounds away together as closely as possible behind the first Fox that leaves the covert. If the Hounds have found their own Fox and are tied to him with a good cry, he will be wise to await events, bearing in mind the golden rule that Hounds should never be stopped off one Fox and put on to another, however tempting this proceeding may appear to be at the moment. Should they throw up suddenly, and another Fox is holloaed away when all is silent, it is of course just possible for a clever Huntsman, if he is up wind of the pack, to pounce upon the chance like lightning and to carry them away to the holloa. But do not forget that to do this is to take a liberty which can only

be justified by complete success, while a failure, or even a partial success, may ruin the whole day. But there are other occasions when the scent in covert, particularly in a thick one, may not be so good, and only a few Hounds have opened. The whipper-in holloas a Fox away down the wind, probably the same one that the Hounds have found. He should not continue holloaing longer than is necessary to let the Huntsman know that the Fox is away. The leading Hounds may or may not go to the holloa. But the worst thing the Huntsman can do is to gallop off to the holloa with them and begin blowing his horn for the rest of the pack when he gets there. The Fox having gone away down wind, most of the best Hounds will be left in the thickest part of the covert and may not hear the horn at all, and at best will get a bad start, a poor reward indeed for having generously gone into the thorns and brambles to get the Fox on his legs, and one that may well make them rather chary of repeating the process. It is true that with a certain amount of luck every Hound may eventually be counted out of covert, provided always they do not get on to another Fox on the way; but the tail will be separated from the head by one or two fences, and probably by several ladies and gentlemen who will have galloped down wind after the Huntsman in order to get a start, so that the pack will not get together until the

leading Hounds have come to the first check. Nothing could be more demoralizing.

When the Hounds who are left behind have been striving with their heads in the air to get to the front, it takes them some time to grasp the situation when they get there; many valuable moments are lost before they recover their *moral* and put their heads down; acute observers will tell you that under these circumstances, unless there is a burning scent, things are never quite the same again, and that a minute or two, apparently lost at the beginning in giving every Hound a good start, is recovered over and over again in the course of the run by the concentration and cohesion resulting from the whole body starting in a mass. In order to accomplish this, the moment a Fox is holloaed away down wind the Huntsman should either stand still or, if necessary, turn back up wind, so as to get into close touch with the body of the pack. He should then tell them that the Fox has gone and that he wants them. For this purpose he should reserve one particular call on his horn, a call that he never sounds except when the Fox has broken covert, or when he has got his foot upon the Fox's dead body. Hounds will fly to this note like nothing on earth, and will come tumbling out of the thick covert into the ride, or field as the case may be, only too gladly. The Huntsman then canters them round to the holloa — where the

whipper-in should be standing on the line, having stopped any leading Hounds that may have hunted the Fox through the covert—and lays on both ends of his pack together, so that he gives each Hound a fair start, and correctly carries out the first phase in the operation designed for the purpose of catching his Fox.

CHAPTER VII

The Huntsman in the open—Mr. Thomas Smith's patent cast—Examples in practice—Some maxims about casting—A sinking Fox.

LET us now imagine that all has gone merrily for a mile or two. It may be one of those pet days on which Hounds can burst their Fox and run into him in about half-an-hour, the ladies and gentlemen having had their work cut out to keep with them. To all who take part in it, an affair of this kind is the very elixir of Fox-hunting, probably of all sport. To the Huntsman it is the quintessence of his ambition. Sometimes it is suggested that, inasmuch as the weather and the Hounds and a certain amount of luck are the only factors, the Huntsman is merely a passenger. Do not believe it. The victorious burst is the concentrated result of weeks and months of careful training, feeding, and conditioning, and reflects the highest credit on the man who has been responsible for these things, to say nothing of his skilful performance in getting all his Hounds away together on the

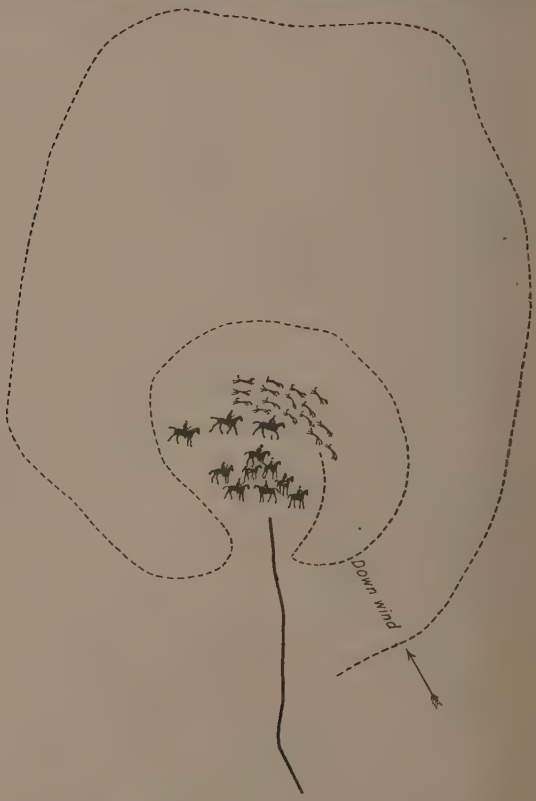
back of his Fox. The late Lord Henry Bentinck, in his own inimitable manner, puts it so well that it is impossible not to quote him :

" The highest praise that can be given to a Huntsman is for a fool to say, ' We had a great run, and killed our fox ; as for the Huntsman, he might have BEEN IN BED.' "

Or the day may be one of those rare days, almost as delightful as that described, when, although the pace is not so good, Hounds are able to follow their Fox without any help wherever he goes, and if they do not change on to another, to wear him down in about an hour, or perhaps longer. But on nine days out of ten, they will be brought to their noses in less than twenty minutes. In the meantime, the ideal place for the Huntsman to ride should have been about a hundred yards to the right or left rear of the pack, whichever is down wind of them. He should as far as possible look ahead, so as to anticipate difficulties, but his attention should be mainly concentrated on the leading Hounds, so as to mark the magic spot where they lose the scent. This faculty is by no means so easy as it sounds, and to exercise it correctly requires a practised eye. For instance, a party of young Hounds, rejoicing in the lead, sometimes seem to think that the fun is going to last for ever, and in their exuberance will often drive on, and even throw their tongues for several

yards past the place where the Fox has turned, before they will admit their mistake. There is no animal so masterful and cocksure as a young dog Hound who has raced for the lead and won it. The head, therefore, cannot be too carefully watched, so that if, in the last resort, a cast has to be made, the Huntsman should always have in the back of his mind the exact spot where the scent was actually lost. He also ought to have in the map of his mind Mr. Thomas Smith's invaluable sketch of a cast in his *Diary of a Huntsman*, published in 1838. This sketch as a general guide for recovering the line after the Hounds have done trying for themselves, and when there is nothing to indicate where the Fox has gone, cannot be beaten; it is hardly too much to say that it ought to be hung up on the wall over every Huntsman's bed. A Huntsman who will be content to follow the principle of it, and set his face against fancy casts, will be surprised how his Foxes will come to hand, provided always that he knows to a yard where the scent failed. It is here reproduced, and the explanation of it cannot be better given than in Mr. Smith's own words. It should be observed that Mr. Smith cannot be very far wrong, because, in the Craven country—not the best scenting country in England—he hunted his own Hounds, and in one season killed ninety Foxes in ninety-one days. "The principle of it," says Mr. Smith, "at

starting, is startling, yet few succeed better, namely, that of first holding the hounds the way he does



MR. SMITH'S SKETCH OF A CAST.

From "The Diary of a Huntsman," by Thomas Smith, 1838.

not think the fox is gone. Thus, when at a check, and the pack have made their own swing, he then holds them round to the right or left, whichever is most up wind; consequently this side would have been the most unlikely; for they probably would not have checked at first had it been right, owing to its being rather up wind, when, if it does happen to be right, they hit it off directly, so that it takes scarcely a minute to hold them round back, behind the spot where they checked, about a hundred yards or so. He then turns and takes a little wider circle back, to the left the same distance, till he reaches, or nearly so, the line he came to behind the check at first. Now having ascertained for certain that his fox is not gone back, or short to the right or left, he can with confidence begin a wider cast than he would have ventured to make otherwise, owing to a fear that the fox had headed back, or to the right or left. The wide cast he commences on the left from behind, progressing, according to his judgement, and selecting the best scenting ground forward, beyond any fallow or bad scenting ground. As he now knows that the fox must be gone on, this cast is continued all round in front, and to the right, till he again reaches the line behind; he then takes a wider cast either way, and is guided by circumstances: but nineteen times out of twenty this last is not required, except the fox is headed some distance back, and the

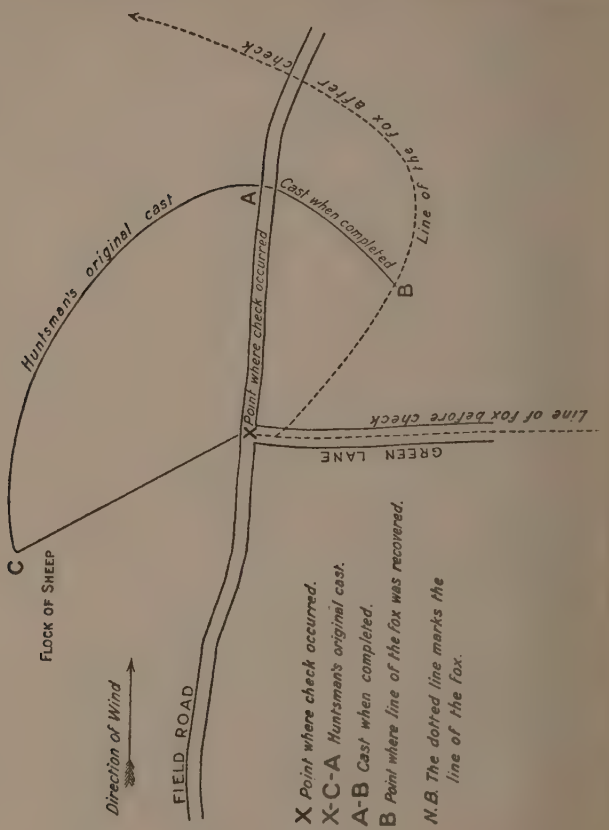
steam and stain of the horses prevents the hounds feeling the scent, the quick first cast back. If there is no wind to guide him, there may be a cover to which the fox is gone, on the left; but still he holds them first the unlikely side."

The one contingency that Mr. Smith would seem to omit is that of the Fox having gone to ground and the Hounds having failed to mark him. Those who have studied and applied this plan can give numerous instances of its success. Some years ago, on a very cold day in January, with a steady north wind blowing, a pack of Foxhounds had hunted their Fox due west for about five miles at a fair hunting pace with little or no help. The first real check then occurred one field short of a turnpike road running almost due north and south. Hardly a mile away, straight down wind on the left or southern flank, was a well-known stronghold. A man in a one-horse trap was halted in the road, having heard the Hounds. He had not seen the Fox, though the Fox might have seen him. It looked like a thousand to one that the Fox had turned down the wind to gain the friendly stronghold, and a very strong temptation arose to hold them that way. But not forgetting Mr. Thomas Smith, the short up-wind cast was tried, nearly back to the original line; in less than two minutes they hit him off and raced into him in the middle of a grass field three miles farther

on, over the road. What had probably happened was that the Fox had seen the man in the trap, turned three-quarters right about, and then crossed the road to make his original point,—an eight-mile point, and with the exception of the sharp turn just described, nearly straight all the way. The seemingly obvious down-wind cast would no doubt have saved the Fox, while Mr. Smith's recipe undoubtedly killed him.

On another day Mr. Smith was almost forgotten, and yet in spite of the fact that he was only tried as an afterthought, the Fox was killed in a neighbouring country after a fine run. The Hounds had thrown up at a point marked X on the map, at the end of a grass lane which was crossed by a field road making a T-shaped junction of roads. In the corner of a field, at the top of the T on the left front, a flock of sheep had run together at a point marked C on the map. The wind was blowing from the west, or left of the line. The Huntsman naturally held the Hounds beyond the sheep to point C, but with no response. He should now have held them up wind to the left nearly back to the original line, and then have held them round the front as far as the right rear to point B on the map, so as to draw a complete cordon round X, the spot where they last had the scent. Instead of that he began with a down-wind cast only as far as the point A on the map, and announced that

he had lost his Fox. To get back up wind through



MR. SMITH'S CAST PUT INTO PRACTICE.

the horses was a matter of some difficulty. As a

last resort, therefore, he was asked at least to complete his down-wind circle. Luckily the Fox had not turned up wind, so he hit him off when he had got nearly back to the right of the original line at point B on the map. The Hounds hunted slowly into a long covert on the side of a hill a mile down wind, from which the hunted Fox was luckily viewed away. This gave the Hounds a new chance, and they got on to terms with him and killed him in a patch of gorse bushes after another three miles, the pace quickening every minute. At the place where the check occurred the Fox had probably been headed, turned back on his own line, and eventually re-made his point.

This is a valuable concrete example of the vital necessity of completing the circle and covering all the ground when making a cast. When a cast has to be made, it must be scientific, and not sketchy. Nothing can be worse for a young Huntsman than to make a vague drift down wind and then to have the luck to hit off either his own Fox or another one. He will be lauded to the skies for having made what is called a "bold forward cast," and will think he is going to do the same thing every time. Deluded Huntsman! The next time, and the next, he will get farther and farther from his Fox, and those who were foremost in praising him on the ruinously lucky day will now become his most mordant detractors. "A nice

fellow, but he never kills his Foxes. It is all over with him at the first check." If he had followed the Thomas Smith principle, the worst that the most inveterate crabber could say would be, "Oh! he is a bit slow; I can't make out how he does it, as he often seems to cast back; but somehow or other he kills his Foxes." To sum up, then, the things to be remembered by the Huntsman in making a cast are, first, the place where the leading Hounds last had the scent; second, to follow the general direction of circles up and down wind already described; third, to keep every Hound either in front of him or well away on his flank; fourth, never to force the pace, but to regulate it by the pace of the Hounds, bearing in mind that, with a burning scent, they can be cast almost at a gallop, and that with a poor scent they can only be cast at a walk. (It may here be remarked that some Huntsmen always make their casts at the same pace, usually the trot, which must surely be a mistake, resulting in either casting over the line or else in causing the pack to straggle when they should all be together; the cast should be made at the highest speed at which cohesion can be maintained); and fifth, to keep his whipper-in inside, and not outside the circle. The Hounds will always revolve on the circle of which their Huntsman is the pivot, if he will say a word to them from time to time when they lose sight of him

owing to the fences or formation of the ground. They should need no whipper-in to turn their heads, if the Huntsman knows how to handle them; to say nothing of the fact that in most countries the fences will not allow the whipper-in to ride round the outside of the circle. He had far better, while the cast is being made, ride behind the Huntsman, save his horse, and make himself useful by getting the gates open; though, if both men are there, the second whipper-in might profitably sink the wind and perhaps give the Huntsman a good lift. Should he be lucky enough to get a view, or obtain sound information, he should let the Huntsman know as quietly as he can, point with his cap the direction of the Fox, and, if possible, meet the Huntsman so as to tell him all about it on his way to the holloa. The Huntsman, even if he views the Fox himself, should take hold of his Hounds quite quietly and canter them up to the place where the Fox was last seen.

One more maxim about casting and we have done. It is indeed contained in Mr. Thomas Smith's advice, though not explicitly stated. It is, always to try to recover the line at the nearest possible point to where it was lost, and never to yield to the temptation to get nearer the Fox by getting ahead of this point, and trust to striking the line farther on, however strong the probability of success may appear. This maxim also applies in going to a

holloa. One fine day a Fox was found in a small covert on the north side of a road that runs from Bristol to Hull. The Fox went away up wind, and ran for three fields parallel to the road in the direction of Hull. He then made a sharp turn to the right, and the Hounds overran the scent, flashing rather wildly for a hundred yards or so. One of the Staff who had not left the road saw the Fox cross the road, but could not see him beyond it. He held up his cap, and as the Huntsman approached gave him full information. The Huntsman jumped in and out of the road, carried his Hounds with him, made a wide circle round the open fields, expecting to pick up the scent every second, but never crossed the line at all. Being anxious to show sport to an eager Field, he no doubt thought that this risk was worth taking in order to save time. What he ought to have done was to have laid on his Hounds at the exact place in the fence where his man saw the Fox leave the road. No one, indeed, could have reasonably found fault with him even if he had made assurance doubly sure and laid them on at the place in the fence where the Fox had been seen to enter the road, and let them hunt him out of it. Either of these courses was a certainty; the course he actually took was a speculation, which spoilt the run.

Let us now suppose that the check has been successfully dealt with. Unless the Fox has turned

up wind, or his line has been quickly recovered on the first short down-wind cast, he will have gained some ground, and the pace will now very likely become slower, until he begins to tire and the Hounds begin to work up to him. So far we have imagined the chase to have taken place over the open country; but few runs of any length are recorded in which no coverts are touched. If the Fox goes into a small covert the Hounds should be allowed to hunt his line into it. It is tempting to take them off their noses and try to hit the line on the other side. But the danger of hitting off the line of a fresh Fox who has moved on hearing the cry is too great to warrant this speculative practice, while, if no Fox has left the covert, the Hounds will have been taken off their noses and deceived, with nothing to show for it; though, if a clever whipper-in has seen the beaten Fox go away, the manœuvre can be, and probably ought to be, tried. If the hunted Fox goes into a woodland or chain of coverts, say in a park, the Huntsman should keep as near the leading Hounds as he can, and constantly sound his horn and voice. This lets his men and his field know the direction of the chase, holds the pack together, and tends to keep the Fox's head straight. Some say that this also tends to move fresh Foxes out of the way and thus reduce the risk of changing Foxes. An acute observer once said that from time to time a

hunted Fox will stop to listen, and if he hears nothing will often turn. If he hears his pursuers, either human or animal, he will usually go straight on. At this phase of the run it is of no avail for either whipper-in to get too far ahead for a view. If the Fox keeps fairly straight the Hounds will hunt his line. If he turns right or left, the man who has posted on will very likely be thrown out, and therefore not be available at the very moment when his Huntsman most wants his help to concentrate on a sinking Fox. The right place on these occasions for the first whipper-in is on a ride, or on the outside of the covert not far away from, and parallel to, the Huntsman. The second whipper-in should be back, and never go on to the next covert or quarter in a woodland until the whole chase is thoroughly well committed to fresh ground, because a sinking Fox, or a Fox who is even beginning to be tired, will so often try to shake off his enemies by turning short back in covert. Then when the Hounds throw up, the timely holloa from the wise man who is looking back is worth anything and has killed many a Fox, while the noses of the Foxes whose lives have been saved by the whole establishment posting forward would cover all the kennel doors in the British Isles.

CHAPTER VIII

The importance of technique—The exercise of patience—The love of Foxhounds.

In the foregoing chapters some suggestions have been offered as to how the Huntsman should act at various phases of the run. Every one who knows anything about Fox-hunting will say with truth that the exact application of the teachings of science cannot always be carried out in the hunting-field, any more than a Cavalry operation can on all occasions, even on peace manœuvres, minutely follow the drill-book. Yet in either case ignorance or neglect of certain rules will generally bring its own punishment in the long run. Although on occasion these rules have to be thrown to the winds, the successful Huntsman will always have them in his mind and apply them nine times out of ten. On the tenth occasion his very knowledge of the rules of his art may give him the privilege and the power of attempting the brilliant *coup*. Some people would seem to think that the true Huntsman does everything by the light of nature. This

proposition opens the door to the old question, "What is genius?" Whether or no it be really the "infinite capacity for taking pains" is a matter that will not be pursued here. But it can be asserted without fear of contradiction that no Huntsman has ever risen to eminence without understanding the science and art of Fox-hunting, and being fortified in his application of them by the never-varying use of an intelligent and intelligible technique. The method and style of handling Hounds both before and after finding the Fox have already been dealt with. The proper use of the horn and voice remain to be considered. These are of primary importance, being the instruments through which the Huntsman expresses himself to his Hounds, his men, and his Field. They should both be used with the same purpose and in the same manner. Their import should be clear beyond all manner of doubt to all parties concerned. Each phase of the Hunt has its appropriate dog-language and appropriate notes on the horn, which should always be used at the proper time—and on no other occasion. For instance, any one who understands Fox-hunting should be able to stand a mile down wind of the Huntsman and tell by the ear alone exactly what he is doing when he has unkennelled a Fox in covert. The horn need never be used as a general rule until the Fox is found, though, when approaching a small

thick covert after the whipper-in has been posted to view him away, it is legitimate, and perhaps desirable, to blow a short blast to wake up the Fox before Hounds are put in, and save him from being chopped; and, in drawing a woodland, the Huntsman can with advantage blow the same short blast as a signal if he turns round to draw back, whilst he should also cry "Yo Hote back, Yooi over try back" two or three times. It is difficult to describe notes on the horn in writing; perhaps it will be understood if the note in question is described as being sober, consisting of two beats, and containing no element of pulsation or excitement; these should be reserved until the Fox is afoot. When the Fox is found in a small covert the Huntsman had better be silent, his object being to take no advantage of the Fox at this moment and to let him get away. Sometimes the unlucky chop is unavoidable, but if a Huntsman chops more than, say, two or three Foxes in the season, it is not too good a sign of chivalrous intentions. But in a woodland where the Fox can take care of himself, he can rattle his pack up to the leading Hounds, if he is near them, by a view holloa or two and a succession of short, sharp notes on the horn, not more than seven or nine in number. The same horn and holloa should be sounded when the chase crosses a ride, or when he gets a view in covert and wants his Hounds. A limited

number of notes on the horn is advised in covert in order to form as great a contrast as possible to the long call, which must be sounded when the Fox breaks covert. Each Huntsman will probably have his own particular call to get his Hounds out of covert, but should have the imagination to make his horn speak in harmony to this thrilling moment.

Before sounding his horn the Huntsman should invariably holloa "Cop forrard away" as loudly and clearly as he can. This is the final and executive word of command, which should always be given by the great man himself. The pulsations of the long call on the horn that follows should be sustained as long as he has breath in his body, and should be renewed until every Hound is away and the great adventure in the open is definitely launched. The horn should now be returned to the horn case, and need not be taken out again until another covert is entered, or the Fox is killed, run to ground, or lost. The horn need hardly ever be blown in the open, and certainly never should be used when casting, because in the open the Hounds are, or ought to be, in front of the horses. A possible exception to this rule may occur when Hounds divide; when the whipper-in has stopped his lot, and their heads are up, a timely note or two may be invaluable in recalling them to the Huntsman's lot. Do not forget that they can

sometimes hear the horn when they cannot hear the cry of the other Hounds. When the Huntsman has his Fox in his hand or has run to ground, the same call may be used as in breaking covert.

When a covert is drawn blank, the appropriate call on the horn can best be described as a long-drawn wail. The same call can be used for going home, or for calling on stray Hounds. When all the Hounds are on, the Staff should be informed by two short, sharp notes sounded in quick succession.

The above are only general indications, as the method of sounding of the English hunting-horn cannot be expressed in terms of music, as is possible with the more elaborate French instrument. Yet our Huntsmen can, if they cultivate the art, make the short horn speak quite as humanly and clearly as the French Huntsmen can the long one, and can even put more individual character into it, not being tied and bound by an exact musical phrase. The horn recommended is the rather deep-noted "Goodall," which seems to give forth a finer resonance and to be audible at a longer distance than any other horn. Its sound might be called a "twang" rather than a "tweet," to use Mr. Surtees' description that appears in most of his works. A description, however, on paper of the tones of the horn and voice is naturally imperfect, because the thrill that can be afforded by their melody is

indeed indescribable. But whether the Huntsman be melodious or not, there is no excuse for his not being audible and explicit.

The horn and voice are organs that are given to him not only to inspire others, but also to make himself understood. In a woodland the unforgivable sin is to indulge in long periods of silence. One of the surest signs of incompetence is the sight of stray Hounds standing about and listening for their Huntsman, or running vaguely down the rides, probably in the opposite direction to where he is, trying to find him. It is not only waste of time for Hounds to be hunting the Huntsman instead of hunting the Fox, but also creates waste of time later on when the pack has to be called together to draw another covert. Two or more couple are wanting. If he has to abandon them altogether, he is exposing them to all sorts of bad habits and dangers. Nothing is worse for a Hound than to be " ungummed " and be left to his own devices. He becomes independent. He is at liberty to hunt hares, fill himself with garbage, or go home. If the Huntsman stands still and blows for the stray Hounds, valuable time is lost, and much noise made, which may disturb Foxes and so cause trouble. A man is sent back for them, the Staff is depleted of his services at the very moment when they may be most wanted.

All these things would be avoided by a clear

and correct use of the horn and voice at an earlier phase. Prevention is better than cure. The Huntsman as a general rule ought to be able to produce all his pack at any given moment, and should be miserable if any of them are missing. Nor is it a good sign if you ride up to a whipper-in in a woodland and ask him where the Huntsman is, and he says, "I don't know, I have not heard him for a long time." This may be the boy's own fault for getting too far up wind—a not uncommon failing—but as often as not it is due to vagueness and lack of thought on the part of the Huntsman; the Huntsman who is best served is he who makes himself the most intelligible to the Hounds, his men, and his Field.

So much for technique, or the control of the mechanical aids to the chase. What other qualities, besides the power to use these aids effectively, should distinguish the Huntsman with whom we should all like to hunt? Many pages have been written setting them forth. If, indeed, he enjoys the equipment of body and mind that Mr. Jorrocks demanded in his famous advertisement for a Huntsman at the head of the nineteenth chapter of *Handley Cross*, he should go very far. In accepting James Pigg, Mr. Jorrocks certainly had to dispense with a great many of the perfections that he postulated in the columns of the *Handley Cross Paul Pry*. No wonder that the advertisement produced "an

immense sensation in the world of servitude." But although we will not follow Mr. Jorrocks' inimitable counsel of perfection, there are at least two mental qualities that are indispensable to a successful Huntsman. These are without doubt Patience and a Love of Foxhounds.

Now to hunt down a very wild animal with a pack of Foxhounds in the shortest possible time requires a good deal of what some people call dash, and others would call varmint or devil. It is perhaps not too much to say that no Huntsman will be really brilliant unless he has a certain excitability somewhere in his temperament, at least a latent capacity for getting his blood up. If he is wholly deficient in this regard, he may indeed be patient, but he will be so patient that he will get farther and farther behind his Fox every day he goes out, and never kill one at all above ground except by accident. But the power to combine patience with other elements of a somewhat opposite character is not given to every man. Yet it should be assiduously cultivated by the Huntsman. He certainly has every chance to learn it, because there is no school for patience more severe than that of hunting the Fox. The blanks are many and the prizes are few. If on coming home without his Fox he will fairly examine the causes of his failure, he will generally find he has lost more Foxes by being in a bad hurry than

by being what some people call slow. In the pursuit of the Fox everything depends upon system; and without patience no sound system can be thoroughly carried out.

To begin with, it is obvious that the cover must be carefully drawn. In an earlier chapter an attempt has been made to explain that a momentary exercise of patience is essential to getting all the Hounds out of covert together when the Fox is holloaed away. Even more important is the period of patience when they throw up their heads at a check.

But more telling than all is the patient self-control that must be used when the Fox is nearly beaten. And more difficult, because the blood is up and the moment of victory would seem to be at hand. Strange as it may seem, it may sometimes be a hindrance rather than a help for some one to catch sight of the beaten Fox a field or two away at the moment when the Hounds are slowly but surely hunting up to him. The temptation to give them a lift is wellnigh irresistible. The Huntsman will have shown the Hounds by his manner that he has got a view, and, by the time he gets them to the place where the Fox was last seen, the Fox will have got through the next fence, or very likely lain down in it. The Hounds will have their heads up expecting to be shown their Fox, and will not readily put them down again.

In the meantime the riders will have carried the Huntsman and Hounds clean past the Fox, who, if he has the luck not to be seen lying down, and the sense not to get up until his enemies are out of sight, will save his brush. The golden rule on these occasions is never to take Hounds off their noses unless it is absolutely certain that they can get a view, as when the Fox is crawling across the middle of a hundred-acre field. Of course if the Fox is heading for a covert known to be full of fresh Foxes, or for an open earth, the *tour de force* of lifting the Hounds must be tried. This was done with success one evening when Hounds had been hunting a ringing Fox for two hours with a poor scent. The first whipper-in viewed him dead-beat making his way straight for a large woodland, where he was nearly sure to put up a fresh one. The orthodox practice had to be abandoned, because, with failing light and scent, the Hounds could not have hunted up to him before he gained the stronghold for which he was heading. The whipper-in was sent on to keep the Fox in view and to try to head him off from the covert which lay about a mile away. The Huntsman took the Hounds off the line, galloped them on, and these two men played into each other's hands so cleverly that the dog Hounds knocked their Fox over just outside the wood—and came home happy. On another occasion the lift was tried, but failure was

only averted by the intelligence of one of the Staff, who did not forget to look back. The bitch pack had brought their Fox across the vale at a good pace for fifty minutes, and came to a check in a turnpike road—no doubt owing to the Fox having turned right or left in the road before crossing it. The Huntsman, seeing him creeping up the side of a fence about three hundred yards ahead, caught hold of the Hounds and tried to lay them on at the spot where he last saw the Fox, near a haystack close to the fence. No response. He then held them vaguely on without a line for nearly half a mile, followed by the whole Field. In the meantime one of the Staff wisely reconnoitred the ground where the Fox was last seen, and marked him lying closely tucked under the haystack. He was luckily able to send a friend to bring the Huntsman back while he stayed and watched the Fox. On this occasion it is clear that only by a clever piece of staff work was the view prevented from being fatal to the Huntsman. Had he not caught sight of the Fox and yielded to the natural temptation to lift his Hounds, they would soon have hit the line out of the road and worked up to their Fox by themselves.

Experience should tend to cultivate the faculty of patience. Patience in the face of a persistent run of bad luck: patience at critical moments in the hunting-field.

Add to Patience the Love of Foxhounds.

It is often said that some men are "doggy" by nature, and possess some charm that makes all dogs love and obey them. Whether this is true or not is incapable of proof. But there is no manner of doubt that the practice of common sense and the cultivation of sympathy will go a very long way in the art of dealing with a pack of Foxhounds in the field.

The first essential for the Huntsman to bear in mind is never to lose his temper with the Hounds, nor even to speak harshly to them. He may lose his temper with his Field, his men, or his horse, though he had much better keep smiling with all three. But once he loses his temper with his Hounds he gets out of tune with them, and his whole influence over them has vanished.

A pack of Foxhounds is seldom in quite the same mood two days running, being keenly influenced by the scent and the weather. On some days they appear to be wild and headstrong, on other days listless and slack. But whatever they do, the Huntsman should always place the most favourable construction on their proceedings, and be ready to take all the blame for himself; he should never be in such a frame of mind as to blame his Hounds. Of course it is a fatal mistake to be overcome by sentiment to the extent of being lenient to rogues, especially if they are mute. A mute Hound should

always be put down at once. Some Huntsmen are apt to get too fond of old Hounds, or to spoil certain Hounds who have made a lucky hit and so got them out of a difficulty. A certain dog Hound once puzzled out the line of a Fox down the middle of a road and put everybody right. The Huntsman was so pleased at this that, whenever his Fox had run down a road, he relied exclusively on this dog, who soon found this out and from that moment had the poor man completely at his mercy. He would put his nose down whenever he got on a road, travel down the road with or without a line, and even look back from time to time as if to invite the Huntsman to follow him, and so caused the loss of Fox after Fox by drawing the whole establishment after him long past the place where the Fox had turned out of the road. No. A pack of Hounds should be hunted collectively and not individually; the love of Hounds should never degenerate into favouritism.

CHAPTER IX

The Foxhound—Mr. Barry and Mr. Meynell—The modern Foxhound—Foxhound Shows—Rounding.

THE modern Foxhound is bred, or ought to be bred, with a sound constitution, contained in a graceful, elegant, and symmetrical body of a size which is neither bulky nor insignificant. This type has now held the field for about one hundred and seventy years. The middle of the eighteenth century marks the evolution in the breeding of Foxhounds for courage, stoutness, and speed. Before that time our ancestors were satisfied with something very much slower. They apparently kept Hounds who had to be taken out at an undignified hour in the morning to drag up their Fox in the hopes of getting on to terms with him before he had properly digested his supper, perhaps killing him after a leisurely stern chase lasting well into the afternoon. But this pottering style did not suit the ardent spirit of such pioneers as Hugo Meynell, John Musters, and John Smith-Barry. During the decade 1750–1760 the modern

system of unkennelling the Fox at a gentlemanly hour in the morning, and bursting him by the speed and condition of the Hound, was successfully launched. The best evidence of the new pace is afforded by the celebrated match at Newmarket, which took place in 1762. A match was made between Mr. Meynell and Mr. Barry, each to run a couple of his Hounds a drag, from the rubbing-house at Newmarket town-end to the rubbing-house at the starting-post Beacon-course, a distance of four and a half miles, for five hundred guineas. After the match was made, the famous Will Crane was invited to train Mr. Barry's couple of Hounds, of which Bluecap was four and Wanton three years old. Crane at first objected to their being Hounds that had been entered, and wished for young Hounds, who might probably be taught with more certainty to run a drag; his motion, however, was set aside, and the Hounds were sent to Rivenhall, in Essex. As Crane had foretold, at the first trials to induce them to run the drag they took no notice; but at length, by dragging a Fox along the ground, and then crossing the Hounds upon the scent, and taking care to let them kill him, they became more handy to a drag, and had their exercise regularly three times a week upon Tip-tree Heath; the ground chosen was turf, and the distance over which it was taken was from eight to ten miles. The dogs were in training

for one month, their food consisting of oatmeal, milk, and boiled sheep's trotters. On the 30th of September the drag was drawn over the distance previously agreed on, and the four Hounds were laid on the scent: Mr. Barry's Bluecap came in first; Wanton, very close to Bluecap, second; Mr. Meynell's Richmond was beaten by upwards of a hundred yards, and his second, a bitch, never ran in at all: the course was covered in eight minutes and a few seconds. Threescore horses started with the Hounds.

Copper, Mr. Barry's Huntsman, was the first up, but the mare he rode was completely blind at the finish. There were only twelve horses up out of the sixty; Will Crane, who was mounted upon Rib, a King's Plate horse, only finished twelfth. The odds, before starting, were seven to four in favour of Mr. Meynell, whose Hounds it was said were fed, during the time of training, entirely with legs of mutton. This epoch-making affair is immortalized by Sartorius in pictures belonging to the present Lord Barrymore, who also has, at Marbury Hall, a portrait of Bluecap by an unknown artist, which perhaps may not do justice to the subject. Two structural points, however, are interesting, being symptoms of speed: the forearm is placed under the very foremost part of the shoulder, and the hocks are well let down.

And so the modern Foxhound was evolved from

models like Mr. Barry's Bluecap, and Mr. Corbet's Trojan, bred for quality, stoutness, and speed. It is sometimes argued that one type of Foxhound is not enough, because different countries require different Hounds. The validity of this maxim is doubtful. In a sense it may be true that a coarse, bulky, heavy-shouldered brute, who would be ridden over in the first field in the Midlands, might manage to hide his congenital defects and keep out of the way of underbred horses in a cramped country where small enclosures are fenced from each other by impossible banks. But in truth there is no country where a well-bred Hound of the middle size, with good neck and shoulders, will not hold his own with any other sort that has yet been bred, besides being far more pleasing to the eye.

Let us try to describe him in a little more detail. He stands not less than twenty-three, and not more than twenty-four inches high. He has a lean head, rather conical than flat, with a delicately chiselled muzzle; dark, full, luminous eyes, denoting keenness and intelligence; close-lying ears, small and pointed. His long neck, with the line of the throat quite clean, is supported by sloping shoulders, at the foremost point of which his fore-legs are set on, with knees near to the ground, plumb straight whether viewed from the side or the front. His feet are round without being fleshy, with the toes

close together. His fore-ribs are deep, but not so widely sprung as to push his shoulders forward. The upward curve of the under-line is not unduly pronounced, even when he has not been fed for twenty-four hours. His muscular back is flat and straight right up to the point where his feathery and delicately curved stern is set on. The thighs are wide and muscular, supported by straight hocks near to the ground like his knees. His coat is smooth, glossy, and so supple that you can pick up a handful of it from his back and see it glide back into its place the moment it is released.

A Hound built on these lines would be difficult to beat in any country. If, however, we wish to perpetuate the type, the question arises whether the mating of dogs and bitches of the middle size may not tend to breed Hounds that are too small, until eventually we get our Foxhounds as small as harriers. There seems to be no danger of that at present. "Keep your own hounds of the middle size," said an old breeder, "and you can always go to other kennels where they keep big ones for a stallion hound." But the probability is that in many Kennels during the last fifty years the more massive sort has become the more fashionable.

The celebrated Brocklesby Rallywood, entered in 1843, with Sir Richard Sutton's and Mr. Osbaldiston's best blood in his veins, came to Belvoir in

1851 in the time of the no less celebrated Will Goodall, and is said to have made the Belvoir Pack. Goodall fell deeply in love with him, and bred from him freely. His own opinion of Rallywood is quoted by Mr. Collins in his very interesting *History of the Brocklesby Hounds*, and is worth repeating here: "This is a most beautiful little short-legged dog, exceedingly light of bone, but with beautiful legs and feet." From the same book we learn that "Druid" in *Silk and Scarlet* wrote of Rallywood that "although good twenty-three, he was mean to those who like a big hound." This dog hunted hard for nine seasons, and was certainly one of the most famous, if not the most famous, sire of the last century. Yet, from the contemporary descriptions of his lack of calibre, he would not be among the fashionable sires of to-day, and would look like a harrier if he were brought to the covert-side with some of our modern dog packs. So there is good ground for the assertion that during the last fifty years the size of Foxhounds has increased. Why? The explanation may possibly be found in the growing popularity of Hound Shows.

There is much to be said for and against a Hound Show. The most valid argument in favour of a Hound Show is that it gives prominence to the value of symmetry. Symmetry in Foxhounds should be aimed at not because it is good to look

upon, but because a certain physical structure enables a Hound to do his work for the longest possible time in the quickest and easiest manner. Other things being equal, the good-looking Foxhound on the flags should certainly, in the long run, beat the ugly one in the field. This is the value of symmetry, and nothing else is. Immediately that a fashionable standard of looks becomes an arbitrary affair, presented, like one of M. Poiret's creations, to satisfy caprice with no reference to utility, then the show-ring becomes dangerous.

Now the tendency of live-stock shows is to create an advantage in favour of bulk, particularly when its exhibition is enhanced by generous feeding. How often does one hear that "a good big one is better than a good little one." This standard of judgement may or may not be all very well when applied to shire horses, bullocks, or pigs. But it is all very bad when applied to Foxhounds. And there can be no doubt whatever that bulk is, unfortunately, an advantage in a Foxhound Show. Nowadays a dog of twenty-four inches, an inch higher than the Brocklesby Rallywood, the Belvoir Gambler, and the Warwickshire Harper, when exhibited against modern Peterborough winners is apt to be described as "a smart little dog, but not big enough," unless, indeed, his structure is so ultra-perfect that nothing can deny it. This

does not mean to say that the Peterborough Foxhound Show should be discontinued. Far from it. The show is extremely valuable in that it preserves a standard of symmetry. The danger is that this standard of symmetry may become a purely show-ring standard, instead of remaining a standard of physical structure designed to enable the Foxhound to tire and catch his Fox. But one Foxhound Show is probably enough. The multiplication of shows might lead to pot-hunting with Foxhounds, the most unthinkable of all calamities.

While we are on the subject of appearance, a word may be said about rounding Hounds' ears. This practice is a relic of an age when mutilation of animals for the sake of appearance was much more common than it is to-day. Horses' ears, for instance, were cropped for no other reason than to gratify contemporary fashion. There could have been no other reason. It is urged that Foxhounds' ears are still rounded for certain practical purposes, such as a healthy letting of blood, and the avoidance of tearing the ears in brambles and thorns. And on the other hand it can be claimed that nature gave Hounds long ears to protect the ear-hole from water getting into it. Either of these reasons is open to argument. But probably the principal reasons are that the eye has become accustomed to rounded ears, and that inasmuch as the different shape and length

of Hounds' ears are accentuated by giving a free rein to nature, the uniform appearance of a pack is enhanced by rounding all ears to the same length.

Many people think that all Hounds' ears, however shapely by nature, look better when they have been artificially curtailed. So that the matter of rounding probably resolves itself into a question of taste. Masters who have abandoned the practice certainly save their men and Hounds from some very sanguinary hours in the Kennel. Moreover, the silken ear of the Hound, untouched by the knife, lying close to his head, tapering down to a delicate point, is surely one of nature's endowments which cannot be improved by human interference.

The average Foxhound is at his or her best during the third and fourth seasons of hunting. It is, no doubt, delightful to see the puppies entering to the sport of their ancestors in their first season, but they cannot be considered reliable until they have completed at least two seasons of Cub-hunting. A bitch may then be mated. But it is really wise not to breed from a dog Hound until after the whole of his second season is completed. In this way he will have done three Cub-hunting seasons before the time of year arrives for putting him to the stud, and his stoutness and steadiness will have been fairly tested. Indeed the more brilliant a dog puppy appears to be in his first season, the more chary one should be of

using him. His pedigree may be spotless, and the risk may seem a very small one, but his very brilliancy, fortified by a stroke or two of good luck, may very easily make him conceited and develop in his character vices that may be transmitted to his descendants with disastrous effects to the pack. Perhaps he may contain in his disposition all the latent faults of his otherwise illustrious progenitors, so that to breed from him too early in his career, until these faults have had a chance of declaring themselves, is an offence against the principle of selection which is the secret of true breeding. Some breeders may say that we have now arrived at an era in the breeding of Foxhounds when all pedigrees contain the same strains, so that particular selection need not be so carefully studied. This argument pushed to its extremity would seem to convey that Foxhounds can be produced indiscriminately like guinea-pigs. Be this as it may, nothing can ever alter the fact that some Hounds are better than others, and that, while no bitch should be kept who is not worth breeding from, too much trouble cannot be taken in the choice of a sire. It is well to study constitution in mating Foxhounds. Given of course tongue, speed, and steadiness, constitution is the most important thing of all. Some very highly-bred strains seem to develop feeble constitutions; it is therefore wise to resist the temptation of using a sire because

he is first-rate in his work, if his food does not do him any good even when he has been coaxed to eat it. His descendants will be weak to resist disease, difficult to rear, and will cause much loss of time and much disappointment.

Breeders' opinions differ as to the degree of closeness that should be observed in comparing the pedigrees of a sire and a dam whom it is proposed to mate. It is not necessary to have the whole Mendelian theory at the fingers' ends, but it is a good rule of thumb not to allow the same name to occur more than once until you get above a line drawn across the top of the second generation. That is to say, that every Hound should at least have different great-grandsires and great-granddams on both sides of the house. When you get farther back than the second generation the same names may occur, indeed must occur, dotted about all over the pedigree chart. This is necessary in order to preserve the type. It is a mistake to go too far away in blood. To take an extreme case, a fantastic alliance between an English Foxhound and a Welsh Foxhound who have no ancestors in common, is calculated to produce a family of freaks of no recognized type, or perhaps the whole litter will favour the English or the Welsh, according as the one or the other is dominant or recessive.

Another good thing to remember in breeding,

which would seem obvious, though occasionally forgotten, is that, in the long run, like begets like. If straight Hounds are wanted, it is asking for trouble to breed from crooked ones. If it is desired to breed Hounds with good necks and shoulders, the most likely chance of success is to select a sire with good neck and shoulders, and mate him with a bitch of similar structure in this regard.

A well-bred pack of Foxhounds will not contain the names of many different foreign sires in its list. The best packs in England are bred from comparatively few strains. By adhering to these one is sure sooner or later to produce replicas of the best types in certain families; they are bound to crop up from time to time; nothing, as far as we understand the laws of heredity, can possibly prevent their appearance. If, on the other hand, the M.F.H. goes to all and sundry Kennels in search of a type that pleases the eye, and uses five or six sires of good looks but doubtful ancestry, he may perhaps breed a good-looking one, but he is not likely to breed a stallion hound or a brood bitch that will endow posterity. Therefore, in looking over a pack of Hounds with a view to finding a sire, one should beware of a Hound list that contains sires from a variety of obscure Kennels. When a suitable sire has been selected from a Kennel of good repute, it is wise to send to him one or two of the best-looking bitches from home, and not

the moderate ones, so as to give him every chance ; if these bitches are themselves got by a foreign sire, so much the better, because any dog puppies from them, provided they grow into stallion hounds, will be far enough away in blood to be mated with most of the bitches at home. One or two lucky hits made on these lines every second or third year will keep a pack together, and confirm the type far better than any number of experiments in first-class looks with third-class pedigrees.

CHAPTER X

HORSE-BREEDING AND THE TRAINING OF THE YOUNG HORSE

THE breeding of a sufficient number of Hounds need not present any great difficulty, but the breeding of a plentiful supply of hunters will not be so easy. Ireland has been the great reservoir for hunters for many years, but it would appear that in the attempt made in that island during the War to breed light-draught horses, the breeding of hunters has suffered. It is, however, reasonable to expect that the demand will create the supply, especially when one or two plentiful hay harvests have made the keep of hunters more possible. In the meantime, there is no doubt that more hunters can be bred in Great Britain. They are likely to be valuable for some years to come, and it is well worth while, for profit as well as for pleasure, to use every effort to encourage and organize the breeding of hunters in this island.

The most encouraging sign of recent years is the wonderful improvement in the type of thorough-

bred hunter sires exhibited at the King's Premium Show. Ten or fifteen years ago the King's Cup could be won by a horse who would to-day hardly get a premium, and certainly not a super-premium. In those days five hundred pounds was considered a good price to pay for a King's Premium winner, and from two to three hundred pounds was somewhere near the normal price; but during the last decade, especially since the super-premium was offered, some exhibitors began to pay as much as or more than a thousand pounds for a horse, with the result that the Show Yard at Islington in March 1916 presented a finer sight than any country in the world could produce. Well over a hundred British thoroughbred stallions under one roof, is an exhibition that has never been equalled anywhere. These magnificent creatures, under the admirable organization of the Board of Agriculture, are available to breeders in all parts of Great Britain for a fee that is not worth talking about. To be able to command for a trifle of one or two guineas the services of a thoroughbred horse who has stood the test of training and won races, does away with all vestige of excuse on the part of the hunting community for not doing its very best to provide the mares and make the attempt to supply the market upon which so much depends. One of the best ways to encourage the breeding of hunters is by a liberal prize-list at shows for

brood mares and all stock up to seven years old. Every Hunt in the kingdom might have its own show, or join with neighbouring Hunts for the purpose of holding a joint show. A Hunt Horse Show need not conflict with county shows already established. On the contrary, it will tend to help the county shows by stimulating and widening the local interest in horse-breeding. But its main value lies in the fact that it brings the subscribers to any given pack of Foxhounds into personal and responsible touch with the breeding of the animals which are destined to carry them across country. The subscribers to the show will mostly be the same ladies and gentlemen who subscribe to the Hounds. They attend the show, and there have the opportunity of inspecting all the young horses and made hunters belonging to the farmers in the district. The show might almost become a kind of fair. In addition to farmers' classes there should also be classes for the subscribers themselves, in which the farmers are invited to exhibit. The breeding of hunters should no longer be left to the farmers alone. It is obviously the wisest policy, if he wants to follow the Hounds on horseback instead of on foot, for every hunting man to keep a brood mare of his own. It may be urged, in answer to all this, that a Hunt Horse Show presents financial difficulties that cannot be overcome. The answers to this objection are, that

the breeding of hunters will soon be in a very precarious state unless it is organized and stimulated in every possible way, and that unless hunting people are prepared to reckon the support of breeding as part of the necessary expenses of Fox-hunting, we are within measurable distance of having to hunt on foot. But the financing of a single-day show is not in truth a very formidable operation. The main expense of a two-day show is the vast amount of woodwork used for stables, shelters, and offices. This very heavy item does not occur in the expenses of a one-day show, which can be run on an income which is small compared with its good results.

The next question that arises is how to breed the hunter. The ideal hunter is without doubt the thoroughbred horse up to fourteen or fifteen stone. There are not very many of these animals in existence, but, however difficult to breed, theirs is the type at which we should aim. We already have the thoroughbred sires. There is some difference of opinion as to the selection of mares. One school of thought inclines to the opinion that thoroughbred mares, and most hunter mares, have not the requisite calibre to breed a foal big enough to carry weight in the hunting-field through deep ground and over fences, and that the best chance is to mate a thoroughbred sire with a cart or van mare. It is true that every now and then

a fine weight-carrying hunter has been bred from the first cross of these opposite extremes, but whether a mare bred in this way will, in her turn, become a good hunter brood mare is another matter. Some say that by scientifically crossing and recrossing her stock alternately with the thoroughbred and the cart horse, always coming back to the thoroughbred, the right type of weight-carrying hunter should eventually be established. This will take some generations to prove, but the process might be a success in time if strictly carried out on scientific lines by a careful breeder; and a distinct breed of horse for hunting purposes might be evolved, in the same way that the Cleveland Bay and the Hackney have established their identity. At present, however, we have not sufficient data or experience from which to form an opinion. From our experience of the first cross between the thoroughbred and the cart horse, it would seem that the types are too far apart for the experiment to be recommended; such successes as there have been are probably accidental. Six sound, strong van mares with action were carefully chosen, a few years ago, and mated every season with a super-premium thoroughbred sire. In ten years not one of these has bred a hunter; one mare has bred six or seven useful animals, of no very definite character, that can do farm work on light land, or trot to market fairly smartly in a

trap. This slight experience is here given for what it is worth. Van mares were chosen as being, perhaps, a shade nearer to the thoroughbred than a cart mare. But even so, this experiment in blending is not very encouraging.

What, then, is the alternative? The only alternative is to go on as we are doing now, and make the very best of the experience we now have. And this experience is in our favour. All the best hunters we have ridden are either purely thoroughbred or got by a thoroughbred sire from a hunter mare with quality inherited from her own father, whose name is in the Stud Book. One of the main values, and certainly the main charm of the animal we all want to ride, is courage. There is nothing more wonderful than the courage of a well-bred horse. Now a plebeian ancestry may conduce to the size of its posterity, but it is not calculated to endow it with courage. Let us therefore make the best possible use of the material we have ready to our hand in the shape of hunter mares, not far removed from the thoroughbred. It is almost a sacred obligation for any one who owns a mare of this kind either to breed from her or else to take every means in his power to see that she is bred from—supposing that he has to part with her.

Let us now imagine that we have bred the animal we want, and that he is four years old.

Whether for our own comfort or for the purpose of selling him to our friends, he should be thoroughly well broken in every respect before he goes out for his first morning's Cub-hunting. There is nothing more important, from every point of view, than teaching a horse good manners when he is young. He should, at an early age, be trained so that he will stand stock-still while he is being mounted and until the rider gives him the signal to move. Very few horses are really taught to do this properly. He should open gates, and be accustomed to wait, with the reins on his neck, if his rider wants to use both hands to lift a gate that cannot be opened with the whip. He should allow a whip to be cracked by his rider on either side or over his head without flinching. If he is highly strung, nervous, and ticklish, too much pains cannot be taken to get him used to the touch of hands and straps all over his body. In order to do this, it is not a bad plan to teach him when he is three years old to draw a very light harrow or bush or log of wood, driving him from behind with long reins. It will not even diminish his value if he is regularly broken to harness. He should, of course, be absolutely quiet with all road nuisances, and if he can be brought up in the constant companionship of dogs, so much the better. Stress is laid on all this because the possession of good manners by the animal we ride makes all the difference to the

comfort and pleasure of a day's hunting. In addition, it is of course postulated that his mouth is properly made, and that his make and shape are such that he can move well in all his paces and be able to gallop fast. If so, he is at four years old not very far from being a made hunter. "You can teach him to jump," said a wise and witty judge of horses, "but you cannot teach him to gallop"; and, indeed, the teaching of a young horse to jump is the easiest and most delightful part of his tuition. Nearly all horses come to it in time; some do it more comfortably than others; some seem to be natural jumpers the very first time they are asked to get over a country; but there are surprisingly few horses who are really bad jumpers. The proof of this is that, out of a large Field, many indifferent riders are mounted on indifferent horses and still manage to get over big fences with comparatively few mistakes, even if they are not in the first flight. But, in spite of this, our young horse should be given every chance of acquiring the accomplishment with confidence and ease. For this purpose it is well that he should be driven with long reins over fences when he is young, before he is ridden over them. Captain Hayes' long-rein system cannot be beaten for breaking and mouth-making young horses, as well as for teaching them to jump. The tackle required is a thick unjointed snaffle, a standing martingale

with clips to fix on to the rings of the snaffle, a strong surcingle with a ring set on low down on either side, and a pair of reins about eight yards long made of webbing with loops at the ends. The offside rein should pass from the snaffle ring through the ring on the surcingle, and be brought round just above the hocks to the right hand of the driver, whose proper place is on the nearside of the horse, a few feet to the rear. The nearside rein should pass straight from the ring of the snaffle to the left hand of the driver, who should never let go of the loop, even if he has to shorten the rein. He is now at the apex of a triangle, of which the horse forms the base and the two reins the sides. He can drive his horse either straight ahead or in a circle, taking care to keep the right hand low down so as to prevent the offside rein from getting over the horse's back. This rein will be kept in its place by the ring on the surcingle. If by any chance the offside rein does get over the horse's back, or if he gets into a tangle of any kind, all he has to do is to loose this rein at once, and cling for dear life to the nearside rein, so that he will pull the horse's head towards him, and save the situation. If the driver can keep his own head as well as the horse's head, this practice ought never to fail. As soon as the young horse is accustomed to being handled in this manner, he should be invited to jump small places and blind

ditches to make him clever with his feet. As soon as he is over the fence the driver should loose the offside rein from his hand, and the horse will halt or come round in obedience to the pressure from the nearside rein. Horses learn this habit very quickly, and soon begin to stop of their own accord when they are over the other side. It is well to have two assistants on foot standing on the taking-off side of the obstacle on each side of the selected place, in order to supply a little moral suasion by the voice. The whip should not be used except as a last resort; the mere presence of the men is generally enough; most young horses have sense enough to give in to the weight of numbers. The first few fences that our young horse is asked to jump should no doubt be small and perhaps thin, simply for the purpose of giving him confidence. But it is probably a mistake to practise too long over places that can be tampered with. The thing becomes too easy, and the pupil may very well become slovenly and careless. He should be made to learn that jumping—like all other accomplishments—requires a certain effort, and that it is safer to negotiate obstacles with something to spare. For this reason the natural country is a better field for practice than an artificial school, however cunningly it be contrived. An artificial school is of some value in teaching a young horse to balance and stand on his hocks.

But in a very few days he acquires the trick of skimming over the obstacles with hardly an inch to spare, and does not learn to take care of himself as he would in the blind ditches and thorns of the natural country. Timber jumping may perhaps be learnt in a school, and indeed it is wise, even when an aged horse has been imported into the Midlands, to longe him once or twice over a bar before taking him out hunting. But after all is said and done, there is nothing like a run with Hounds to make a young horse. One good gallop will do it with a generous animal, and we will try to say something about this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XI

RIDING TO HOUNDS, AND SOME ADVICE TO THE FIELD

In the presence of so many fine horsemen and horsewomen as we see to-day, the subject of this chapter must be approached with some diffidence. At most Meets of Foxhounds in the Midlands there are generally at least twenty-five ladies and gentlemen, each of whom not only means to be at the top of the Hunt, but also has the courage, the skill, the experience, and the horse with which to get there. The horses, within limits, are perhaps the least of these factors. If these same twenty-five people were to change horses with the second flight, they would still be first when Hounds run. So that any advice contained in this chapter is offered with profound respect.

The right beginning to a day's hunting is to come to the place where the Hounds meet, and to come there in good time. This sounds like a platitude; but both these rules are occasionally broken with disastrous results. It is a very grave

offence against the laws of Fox-hunting to be late for the Meet, or to speculate on the covert that the Master is likely to draw and to wait there for him to come. After Christmas, when Foxes are wilder than earlier in the season, the sound of a voice, the tread of a horse, or the slamming of a gate may very likely frighten the good Fox away before the Hounds come, and so the day's sport is spoilt. Coverts should also be avoided on the way to the Meet for the same reason. If by an unavoidable accident you cannot arrive punctually at the Meet, the least likely way of spoiling other people's pleasure is never to wait near a covert, but to ride the roads until you can join the Hunt. The Master can help very materially in the matter of his Field being punctual at the Meet if he always moves off precisely at the same moment every day. It is a good rule to advertise the Meet at 10.45 until the 1st of March, and move off without fail on the very stroke of eleven. This hour is easier to fix with precision than 11.15. A Master whose own punctuality is not above suspicion, and who, after he has arrived, dawdles about on foot and moves off at "any old time," does not deserve to have a punctual Field.

The really keen Fox-hunter, who is determined to get a start, will not be very far behind the Hounds on the way to covert. If a Fox jumps out of a hedge or crosses the road on the way to

draw—and many more wonderful things than this may happen—those who are nearest the Hounds get the benefit that always accrues to the man on the spot. It is always worth while to begin the day with the expectation that there will be a tearing scent, and that the run of the season is about to take place. It is time enough to talk to friends and leave things to chance after the Hounds have told you that it is a bad scenting day. On arriving at the covert, study the wind and mark in the mind the down-wind corner where the Fox is likely to break ; map out, too, in advance, your dispositions for getting a good start if the expectation is realized. This is not difficult if the covert is small. If it is a woodland, the best thing to do is to try not to let the Huntsman get out of your hearing while he is drawing ; but on no account follow him about or ride in his track now, or indeed at any other time. There is nothing more irritating to a Huntsman than to be conscious that some one is dogging his footsteps. Not only that, the Huntsman should be quite alone when he is drawing, so as to be able to use his ears to the fullest advantage. Another horse clattering, splashing, and champing the bit close behind him, may very easily prevent his hearing the first Hound open when the Fox is unkennelled. The Huntsman indeed should always be given plenty of elbow-room at every phase of the chase.

Some people seem quite unable to ride anywhere else in the whole county except in the Huntsman's pocket. Perhaps it saves them the trouble of thinking for themselves how to take their own line; perhaps they think that if they maintain a horse's length distance in rear of him all day they are sure to see what there is to be seen; but, however this shocking habit has been contracted, it should be sternly repressed.

Let us now imagine that the Fox and the Hounds are well away, and that it looks as if we are in for a good thing. Unless you are one of the very first through the first gate, it is permissible, even if a trifle theatrical, to secure a good start by jumping the fence alongside the gate, if it is negotiable. If this has to be done, however, do it at least twenty-five yards away from the gate, and get your horse well by the head, letting him feel the rein and heel on the side farthest away from the gate, so as to distract his attention from the crowd. These precautions are sometimes forgotten, with the ignominious result that the horse refuses, and butts into the flank of the throng that is wrestling with the gateway. But whether the counter-attraction of the gate is there or not, all, or nearly all horses should be ridden with extra resolution over the first fence or two. If Hounds are really going to run, the ideal place to aim at is somewhere between fifty and one hundred

yards to the right or left rear of the pack, keeping of course on the down-wind side. This is by right the place that should be occupied by and ceded to the Huntsman if he is there to claim it. If he is there no one ought to try to get nearer the Hounds by riding a line inside of that taken by the Huntsman. It is an offence to get between the Huntsman and his Hounds as long as he is riding well up to them. Some Huntsmen, indeed, seem themselves to be too fond of riding in the wake of their Hounds. By doing this they are only making their own job the more difficult. The leading Hounds can be more easily watched by the Huntsman if he rides slightly to one flank of them; but if he rides directly in their line, he will not only tend to drive them beyond the point where the Fox turns, but will also have a string of followers who will aggravate this danger. The ideal state of things is achieved when no one is riding in the wake of the pack, which should be left quite clear of horses for a considerable distance. Therefore, for a follower of the Hounds, the safest place in every sense of the word is well away on the flank. Here there is always plenty of room where he can indulge in that delightful sense of adventure arising from picking his own places at the fences. Some people ride fairly well up to Hounds all their lives, but seem to like a lead whenever they can get it. Most good riders to Hounds will tell you

that, apart from the satisfaction of choosing your own line, your horse as a rule will go better with no one in front of him; there is nothing to distract his attention; there is no risk of having to pull him out of his stride if your leader has a fall; he is "on his own"; he has to look where he is going, and has no incentive to copy the mistakes of the horse in front of him. But in any case it is not wise to trust too much to the automatism of any horse. As a general rule, all horses should be definitely "made up" at each fence. Some riders rather appear to increase the pace as they get near the fence, and to be concerned with the fore part of the horse rather than with his hind part. The opposite practice is the safer; the rider should contract the stride of his horse by taking hold of his head about twenty yards from the fence, bring his hocks underneath him by pressure from leg and heel, and present him at the fence in collected form, marking with the eye the spot where he intends the horse to take off. This procedure also gives the horse the chance of filling his lungs with wind before he makes the effort to jump. Far more falls have been taken by riding too fast at the fences than by riding too slow. There are very few obstacles that a horse cannot clear from a collected canter. A bold horse should certainly be collected in the manner described. With a slug, or a possible refuser, it is obviously necessary

to tighten up the collecting process, even to the extent of letting him feel the spurs, and feel them in good time, so as to make up his mind for him in advance. It is not of much avail to use the whip on a sticky jumper before the fence has been jumped, but, if he jumps it in a slovenly manner, it is wonderful what a few sharp cuts will do if properly applied the very moment he lands. He will dart over the next fence in a surprisingly agile manner. The exact explanation of this altered demeanour is not quite clear. But the above recipe is a certainty, and was recommended to the writer of this book many years ago by one of the finest horsemen in the British Isles, who had for many years ridden all sorts of horses over all sorts of fences at the very head of the Hunt.

Having got a good start and a good place, it is easy to form an opinion as to whether it is a good scenting day or not. If there is a good scent, you may, in the words of an amateur Huntsman who was generally in the same field with his Hounds, ride your horse up to 75 per cent of his value.

On the very best days Hounds will seldom run for more than twenty minutes without a check, or at least a breathing space.

On bad scenting days the wise man will give the Huntsman and the M.F.H. a wide berth, and thus save himself from getting disliked, and his horse from getting tired. On these days the Hounds

check very often, and every time they check they get farther behind their Fox, and therefore tend to hunt more slowly. Yet there are always some sanguine spirits who would appear to think that, by some magical process, the scent will improve after each delay, and, as soon as the Hounds own the line again, begin to compete with redoubled vigour, regardless of the sad truth that, unless the Fox lies down or has a fit, he is every moment increasing the distance between himself and his enemies. The people who form this little band are the same every day. They are, no doubt unconsciously, a great nuisance to the Huntsman and M.F.H., but are animated by nothing but zeal. If only they could be persuaded to take a line either to the right or left of the Hounds, they would see far more sport. If, indeed, they get a little too forward on the flank, they do not do nearly so much harm as if they were riding on the very tail of the Hounds, provided they will pull up when the Hounds are in difficulties, and turn their horses' heads the same way as the Hounds' heads are pointing when they fling themselves towards the horses to recover the scent. Hounds take their sense of direction from horses to a greater degree than many people imagine ; they yield to pressure from horses on their sterns and get driven past the magic spot where the Fox turned, but, when they fling to the right or left, will nearly always

drive through a small group of standing horses to make their own cast, particularly if the riders conform to them by turning their horses' heads.

These remarks are only intended to apply to days when the scent is poor. When there is a good scent nothing very much matters, and every one is at liberty to keep near the Hounds by the quickest route. On days when the scent is so poor that Hounds cannot run for three fields without checking, the wise riders will keep to the gates as much as possible, save their horses, and incidentally avoid making unnecessary gaps in the fences.

If a member of the Field views a Fox, he should turn his horse's head in the direction the Fox has taken, stand up in his stirrups, and point with his hat in hand. It may be remarked in passing, that he cannot do this if he has a hat-string. If he is at a place where the Huntsman cannot see him, he should holloa. Never mind if it is a fresh Fox; the Huntsman need not come to the holloa if he is engaged in doing something else. If nothing happens, it is well to ride back to the Huntsman and give him the fullest information. This should still be done even if the Huntsman answers the holloa. Ride back to him, meet him, and place him in possession of everything you know, so that he may know how to act when he arrives on the spot. If you see any one on foot who has seen a Fox, the cardinal questions to ask him are where

he last saw the Fox, which way his head was, and, above all, how long ago. The Huntsman is sure to ask you this last question directly you get into touch with him, and it creates an unfortunate lapse in your information to be obliged to confess that you did not ask. It is true that some people's estimation of time is a little vague, but as much can be gathered from the manner of the informant as from the exact number of minutes he reckons.

As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, these few hints to ladies and gentlemen who hunt are offered with real respect. They are the result of some observation as to the manner in which the duties of the M.F.H. and his Staff can be made as easy as possible by the Field. It is not proposed to enter at any length into the delicate relationship between the M.F.H. and his followers. In truth he can make it whatever he likes as far as his own limitations will allow. Some Masters may be efficient without being popular. Some may be popular without being efficient. Some may be both popular and efficient. But having devoted a few paragraphs to the conduct of the Field, experience of human nature will tell us that as a general rule it is better for the M.F.H. to say "Thank you" than to say "Get out of the way." Sometimes the tongue obeys the brain too readily, and the sharp word is on the wing. But all sportsmen are very generous, and only too ready

to put it all down to zeal, provided that an honest attempt is being made to show sport. And when all is said and done, the two chief points for the M.F.H. to remember are, that every one comes out for enjoyment, and that the best answer to criticism is to show a good run and kill a dead-beaten Fox in the open. The general public are not bad rough-and-ready critics of any given performance, whether it takes place in the theatre or the hunting-field. In either case their criticism, good or bad, has to be accepted, or else the Box Office returns are apt to suffer.

CHAPTER XII

SOME SPORTING WRITERS

A REVIEW of the literature of the Chase has been so well written in the first chapter of the Hunting volume of the Badminton Library, that it could hardly be improved. The author closes his retrospect with an appreciation of Beckford's *Thoughts on Hunting*, and supposes his reader to be well acquainted with such authors as Delmé Radcliffe, "Nimrod," "Scrutator," Surtees, and Whyte-Melville. There are others besides these, however, who deserve some mention, which will presently be attempted, although this chapter does not pretend by any means to be an exhaustive description of a complete Fox-hunter's library.

Books about Fox-hunting roughly fall into four classes: Text-books, Hunt Histories, Fiction, Poetry. Of the writers of Text-books, taken in the sense of a text-book being a manual of instruction, Beckford is at the top of the class. Country gentleman, Fox-hunter, scholar, linguist, and wit, he has illuminated his *Thoughts upon*

Hunting with an amusing and cultivated style that is quite his own. The authors of the Badminton volume remind us of an appreciation of Beckford's work by a contemporary writer: "Never had fox or hare the honour of being chased to death by so accomplished a huntsman; never was a huntsman's dinner graced by such urbanity and wit. He would bag a fox in Greek, find a hare in Latin, inspect his kennels in Italian, and direct the economy of his stables in excellent French." Every word of Beckford can be studied to-day with advantage by any one who wishes to become M.F.H. If one dared to make any reservation with regard to this distinguished author, one might say that too much attention is devoted to the correction of Hounds by the whip; and that to turn down before the young Hounds a badger, having first taken care to break the teeth of the poor brute, seems a needless piece of cruelty. It is also curious to find such a fine sportsman as Beckford countenancing the turning down of bag Foxes. It is true that he says he dislikes bag Foxes, and proceeds to state his objections to them in his own inimitable manner. But the minute description on the very same page, of how to organize a hunt after a bag Fox, can hardly have been written by any one who had not done it himself.

The best thing in *Thoughts upon Hunting* is

Beckford's description of a Fox chase in Letter XIII. From the point of view of a lover of Hounds, it is probably the best thing of its kind that has ever been written. Here you have the feelings of the enthusiast and the spirit of the sportsman, set down by the pen of the expert in language that is almost blank verse, and can be described without impertinence as being superior to the lines of Somerville, whom he so amply cites. Beckford need not have called Somerville to his aid. He knows how to "get it over" better than the poet. He conveys the romance while preserving the technique of the chase in a style that will always bring a thrill to the heart of the true Fox-hunter.

Less witty and cultivated than *Thoughts upon Hunting*, but almost equally instructive, are such text-books as *The Noble Science*, by Mr. Delmé Radcliffe; *Notitia Venatica*, by Mr. Thomas Vyner; *The Diary of a Huntsman*, by Mr. Thomas Smith; and *Observations on Fox-hunting*, by Colonel Cook. Of these Colonel Cook's work is probably the least familiar to this generation, though a modern M.F.H. would do well to follow almost every word of advice it contains. It is interesting to recall that Colonel Cook married Miss Elizabeth Surtees, a kinswoman of Robert Smith Surtees, author of *Handley Cross* and *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, because, in the latter work, there are two oft-

quoted sayings that are extracted by Surtees from Colonel Cook's book. One is that which he puts into the mouth of Dick Bragg: "A weedy hound is only fit to hunt a cat in a kutchen." The other is to be found in Mr. Puffington's letter to Lord Scamperdale about the celebrated Beaufort Justice: "The late Mr. Warde, who of course was very justly partial to his own sort, had never any objection to breeding from the Beaufort Justice."

The Diary of a Huntsman, by Mr. Thomas Smith, published in 1838, contains the diagram of the famous "all-round-my-hat" cast already described in this book; admirable drawings of a good-looking and a faulty Hound, and of a fresh Fox and a beaten Fox; as well as some sterling advice to Fox-hunters. This is perhaps the best text-book of the lot after Beckford's work, and should be carefully studied by all Huntsmen and whippers-in. *Goodall's Practice*, by Lord Henry Bentinck, can hardly be dignified by the name of a text-book, as it is really only a fragment. But what a fragment! It is of the kind that makes one long for more of the same sort. Every Master, Huntsman, and whipper-in ought to know it by heart. It is but three thousand words or thereabouts, but from its condensed, terse, and "varminty" phrases there is more to be learnt about hunting the Fox than from many volumes ten times its size.

Of course the authorities already mentioned are not in absolute agreement upon all points, but there is one point upon which all the Master minds agree. It is so well stated by Lord Henry Bentinck that his words may here be quoted. He says it is ruinous to a pack of Hounds to meddle with them before they have done trying for themselves. "If they are meddled with in their natural casts they will learn to stand still at every difficulty and wait for their Huntsman . . . for *once* the Huntsman can help them, *nineteen* times the Hounds must help themselves." It is remarkable that, in the accounts we now get every morning in the newspapers of the doings of so many packs, we seldom read of tired Foxes being killed at the end of good runs. A possible explanation of this may be that nowadays Hounds are taken off their noses far too often. Nothing tells in favour of the Fox so much as getting the Hounds' heads up. As soon as ever you see the Hounds following the Huntsman about when they are in difficulties, the Fox is as good as lost. Much stress has been laid on this in an earlier chapter, but it cannot be too often repeated.

Of Hunt Histories there are many. Among the most interesting are *The Annals of the Warwickshire Hunt*, by Sir Charles Mordaunt and the Rev. Walter Verney; *The History of the Brocklesby Hounds*, by Mr. George Collins; *The History of*

the Belvoir Hunt, by Mr. T. F. Dale ; and *The Fox-hounds of Great Britain and Ireland*, by Sir Humphry de Trafford and his collaborators.

Among the writers of the Fiction of Fox-hunting, Surtees must surely be given the palm. He not only thoroughly understood the sport itself, but has also painted with his pen a gallery of portraits which, among a large class of readers, will outlive many of the characters of the novelists of the nineteenth century. It is no impertinence to say that these pen-portraits would have survived even had there been no Leech to make their immortality doubly sure. But what a collaboration ! The alliance between Gilbert and Sullivan is the only alliance in the world of art to which it can be compared. Leech knew his subjects as intimately as did Surtees. Thackeray's paper on Leech's pictures of Life and Character tells us something of the secret of his fame. " The truth, the strength, the free vigour, the kind humour, the John Bull pluck and spirit of that hand are approached by no competitor. With what dexterity he draws a horse, a woman, a child ! . . . Any one who looks over Mr. Leech's portfolio must see that the social pictures which he gives us are authentic . . . the inner life of all these people (the English) is represented. Leech draws them as naturally as Teniers depicts Dutch boors, or Morland pigs and stables. . . . Mr. Leech has as fine an eye for tailoring and

millinery as for horseflesh . . . the backgrounds of landscapes in Leech's drawings are as excellently true to nature as the actors themselves ; our respect for the genius and humour which invented both increases as we look and look again at the designs."

Handley Cross is regarded by most people as the masterpiece of Surtees. For the pure Fox-hunter this appreciation is certainly correct. In the pages of this book there is Fox-hunting of all sorts, from the romantic narratives of Michael Hardy's fine hunting run, and of the last effort of the old customer in the middle of a large grass field outside Pinch-me-near-Forest, down to the priceless burlesque of Fox-hunting on the Pomponius Ego day. Mr. Jorrocks' sporting lectures are rich in anecdote and contemporary reference. They are amusing enough, if a trifle forced, and have the merit of giving an advertisement to Geoffrey Gambado's "Academy for Grown Horsemen." No sporting library is complete without a copy of this work.

But the student of the early Victorian epoch, whether or no he or she be a Fox-hunter, will find a delicious comedy of contemporary manners in *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, *Ask Mamma*, *Plain or Ringlets*, and *Mr. Romford's Hounds*. In these books we find that Surtees could not only portray Huntsmen and grooms, but could with equal skill present noblemen, country gentlemen, bankers, parvenus, actresses, card-sharpers, farmers, and

many other characters. The account of Mr. Sponge's visit to Jawleyford Court cannot be beaten. It is a delightful piece of burlesque, in half-a-dozen chapters, of this pretentious Jawleyford with his spurious hospitality, his cheap cellar, his third-rate art gallery, his weakness for a lord, his ostentatious reception of his tenantry, his family pride, his love of display,—in fact all the attributes that make a really vulgar snob of a man who ought to have been a gentleman. All this, together with the interior economy of Jawleyford Court, is depicted by the hand of a master whose power of penetrating character and skill in delineating it is surely of the very first order. The great merit of his picture of Jawleyford is that, with the exception of the extravagance in making him ride to the Meet of the Hounds in the uniform of the Bumperkin Yeomanry, it is not really overdone. Less subtle, but none the less historical, are the portraits of Lord Scamperdale, Jack Spraggon, Mr. Puffington, and Mr. Sponge himself. *Ask Mamma* is not so widely read as *Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour*, but is well worth reading, if only for the Pringle correspondence and the portrait of "that gallant old philanthropist, the Earl of Ladythorne, of Tantivy Castle, Featherbedfordshire, and Belvedere House, London." The letters from Mrs. Pringle, who, as Miss Willing the lady's maid had been the friend, and as the widow Pringle

of Curtain Crescent Pimlico afterwards became the wife, of Lord Ladythorne, to her son Billy Pringle, instructing him how to behave while on a visit to Tantivy Castle, and the naïve replies of Billy to his mother, are masterpieces in a manner all their own. Lord Ladythorne is admirably drawn. He had hunted Featherbedfordshire in a style of great magnificence for nearly forty years, so he cannot have been far short of sixty, but in spite of his years "no pretty woman in town or country ever wanted a friend if he was aware of it," and he said that "the sofa and not the saddle was the proper place for the ladies."

Plain or Ringlets is not so clever as *Ask Mamma*, but it contains a first-class comedy scene, depicting an interview between Mr. Jasper Goldspink, the local banker, and the Duke of Tergiversation, the needy political hack peer who was always ready to change his party in order to get office.

Mr. Romford's Hounds is perhaps better known than either *Ask Mamma* or *Plain or Ringlets*, and is certainly too well known to call for much comment here. One cannot help forming a sneaking affection for Facey the Impostor, because he knew so well how to hunt a Fox; and the author contrives to invest Mrs. Somerville, the *soi-disante* sister of Facey, once Lucy Glitters the circus rider and now grass widow of our old friend Soapey Sponge, with sufficient charm to make us think

Facey was a very lucky fellow to have her for his sole companion during a hunting season at Beldon Hall. The most amusing thing in the book is the account of the "camouflage" employed by Lucy and her stage friend Betsy Shannon, to conceal from Facey, up to the very last minute, that the small party which he fondly thought was to be regaled by a rabbit-pie and a cheese before listening to his rendering of "Old Bob Ridley" on the flute, was actually to be a first-class county ball, with a band and a champagne supper provided by the renowned Mr. Fizzer of London, Confectioner to the Queen.

Surtees' works have now survived for some sixty or seventy years, and, among a large class of reader, bid fair to outlive many of the Victorian novelists. Surtees might be described as the Thackeray of Fox-hunting fiction. His characters live. It would be very interesting to know whether a greater number of all ranks in the Army in 1918 knew Rawdon Crawley than knew Mr. Sponge, or whether a greater number knew Becky Sharp than knew Lucy Glitters. Thackeray would probably win the day, but possibly not by a very large majority.

But it would require less courage to hazard the suggestion that, as a sporting writer, Surtees has outlived Whyte-Melville. At the same time, *Market Harborough* can be read again to-day with pleasure. The portraits in this book are indeed

the only portraits in Whyte-Melville's gallery that most people will remember by name without much effort. Mr. Sawyer and his flat-catching horse Marathon, the Honble. Crasher, and Parson Dove have been too well drawn to be easily forgotten, while the spirit of horse-coping that pervades the whole book seems to reappear in most modern transactions.

When we speak of the Poetry of Fox-hunting we probably mean nothing more than Verse. If Coleridge was correct in saying that "Poetry is the blossom and fragrance of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language," then it is doubtful if true poetry can be a vehicle for the spirit of the hunting-field. Yet, on the other hand, as Shakespeare has not omitted to write about the Chase and about Hounds,

> match'd in mouth like bells
> Each under each. A cry more tuneable
> Was never holloa'd to, nor cheer'd with horn,

perhaps it may be claimed that hunting has indeed received the authority of the poets. Those who wish to examine this proposition cannot do better than read a delightful work called *The Diary of Master William Silence; a Study of Shakespeare and of Elizabethan Sport*, by the Right Honble. D. H. Madden, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dublin. The author reminds us of Dr. Johnson's

saying that "He that will understand Shakespeare must not be content to study him in the closet, he must look for his meaning sometimes among the sports of the field."

The official poet of the Chase in the eighteenth century was William Somerville, constantly quoted by many writers until about a hundred years after his death, which took place in 1742. Doctor Johnson is not so kind to Somerville as he is to Shakespeare; he says in his *Lives of the Poets* that "To this poem" ("The Chase") "praise cannot totally be denied . . . and though it is impossible to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers and pleasures of the chase, he has done all that transition and variety could easily effect." Although Somerville outlived this characteristic criticism for some time, he has very few readers to-day, possibly few more than those who come across quotations from "The Chase" in *Handley Cross*.

Of songs and verses about Fox-hunting there are many. The late Mr. Bromley Davenport has made two contributions which may not be very widely known, but are, nevertheless, classics in their own sphere. It is impossible for any Fox-hunter to read the "Dream of an old Meltonian" without a thrill:

> Last night in St. Stephen's so wearily sitting
> (The Member for Boreham sustained the Debate),
> Some pitying spirit that round me was flitting
> Vouchsafed a sweet vision my pains to abate.

The Mace and the Speaker and House disappearing,
The leather-clad bench is a thoroughbred horse,
'Tis the whimpering cry of the foxhound I'm hearing,
My "seat" is a pigskin at Ranksborough Gorse.

How he heard the voices of his dead friends now riding by his side, how he got a start, how he rode his young horse over the Whissendine, how the bitches raced into their Fox outside Woodwellhead Covert, all this is told in fifteen throbbing stanzas, the very best of their kind. There is an exquisite sense of pace about the whole thing, and a gathering note of triumph that cannot be described in writing, but can only be felt by reading the epic itself.

In a different vein, subtle and satirical, is Mr. Bromley Davenport's "Lowesby Hall," a parody on Tennyson's "Locksley Hall," pronounced by Whyte-Melville to be the best parody in the English language. The burlesque is so fine that, in some passages, it is hardly distinguishable from the original. It is as fresh to-day as on the day on which it was written, and is startling in its prophecies of modern events. There are some shafts of satire levelled at the Cobdenites and the Radicals, and that school of thought which we now call Pacifists :

But the gentle voice of Cobden drowns the fierce invader's drum,
And the Frenchmen do but bluster, and Napoleon funks to come.

If for Frenchmen you read Germans, and for Napoleon you read the Kaiser, you have a strange family likeness to a certain school of thought that made itself heard before the War. Then comes more prophecy :

For I looked into its pages and I read the book of Fate,
And saw Fox-hunting abolished by an order from the State.
. . . . . .
Saw the landlords yield their acres after centuries of wrongs,
Cotton lords turn country gentlemen in patriotic throngs ;
Queen, religion, State abandoned, and the flags of party furled
In the government of Cobden and the dotage of the world.

Nor do the Fox-hunters escape :

Hark, my merry comrades call me, and Jack Morgan blows his horn,
I, to whom their foolish pastime is an object of my scorn.
Can a sight be more disgusting, more absurd a paradox,
Than to see two hundred people riding at a miserable fox ?
Will his capture on the morrow any satisfaction bring ?
I am shamed through all my nature to have done so flat a thing.
Weakness to be wroth with weakness ! I'm an idiot for my pains,
Nature gave to every sportsman an inferior set of brains.

This last line is masterly, and was described to the writer by a good judge of literature who had never hunted, as the very quintessence of parody on the author of "Locksley Hall."

It had not been intended to offer comment in these pages on the works of any living author.

But it is irresistible to pay a tribute of sincere admiration to Mr. Masefield's recent work entitled *Reynard the Fox*, which will take a very prominent place on the shelves of most hunting libraries. There has been but one voice among both hunting and non-hunting people in proclaiming its excellence. Had Dr. Johnson seen it he would have had to revise his maxim already quoted in this chapter, that "it is impossible to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers and pleasures of the chase." The feelings of the hunters and the hunted, and in fact the whole spirit of an English hunting country, have never been so faithfully portrayed in rhythm and metre. There has been some discussion among Fox-hunters as to whether Mr. Masefield has committed any solecisms in the matter of hunting technique. To say that he had done so would be to prick spots upon the sun. Yet the Hounds of Sir Peter Bynd would surely have been worthy of a place in the Foxhound Kennel Stud Book, which you may search from end to end without finding any Hound's name expressed by a monosyllable, such as "Queen." The reason of this is that names of a single syllable do not carry when called out in the field so well as names of two or three syllables. The names that are in most general use are what would be described in terms of prosody as dactyls, spondees, and trochees. But possibly Mr. Masefield has authority

for this. Sir Peter would appear to have given the word to move off from the Meet, and the name of the covert to be drawn, to his first whipper-in Tom Dansey, instead of to his Huntsman, and to have called Tom by his surname instead of by his Christian name. Later on the Huntsman also calls him Dansey. He would surely have called him Tom. Mr. Masefield also writes of a pink coat and a crop. Perhaps these words are now sanctioned by general use. Most of us, however, who were blooded in the 'seventies, would naturally talk of a red coat and a whip. Such trifles seem hardly worth mentioning, and they do not detract one jot or one tittle from the fame of Mr. Masefield, who has alone succeeded in writing of a run which would make even the most bloodthirsty Huntsman want the Fox to beat the Hounds at the finish. Perhaps this Fox saved his life because Sir Peter's Hounds were "great chested" and "broad in shoulder," and therefore lacking in a sufficient turn of speed to pull their Fox down in the open. Be this as it may, the account of the run holds the reader breathless from find to finish, and conveys an atmosphere of animal and country life in a manner that can hardly be equalled.

Let us conclude with one who has gone. There is no writer of Fox-hunting songs whose ring sounds more merrily than that of Mr. Egerton Warburton of Arley Hall, a Cheshire squire like Mr. Bromley

Davenport, and the bard of the Tarporley Hunt. "The Woore Country," "The Tarporley Hunt, 1833," "The Little Red Rover," and "Tar Wood" are among the best. But all his songs breathe a spirit of good-fellowship in the hunting-field and conviviality in the Club, to the accompaniment of a jolly jingle of bits, spurs, and claret glasses and the music of the hunting-horn.

This is in his best manner:

Stags in the forest lie, hares in the valley-o!
Web-footed otters are speared in the lochs;
Beasts of the chase that are not worth a Tally-ho!
All are surpassed by the gorse-cover fox!
Fishing, though pleasant,
I sing not at present,
Nor shooting the pheasant,
Nor fighting of Cocks;
Song shall declare a way
How to drive care away,
Pain and despair away,
Hunting the Fox!

THE END

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